



NICK CARTER

WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 234.

Price, Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S NIGHT OFF

OR
HOT WORK WITH
A VOLUNTEER ASSISTANT



BY
THE AUTHOR
OF
'NICK CARTER'

NICK, PATSEY AND CHICK, SPRINGING ACROSS THE STREET, WENT TO THE RESCUE OF THE WOMAN IN DISTRESS.



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NEW YORK, June 22, 1901.

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Nick Carter's Night Off;

OR,

HOT WORK WITH A VOLUNTEER ASSISTANT.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A HOT CHASE.

"Shall you be busy this evening?" asked Edith of her husband, Nick Carter.

She had entered Nick's room to find him with a pipe and a book, a sure sign that nothing of importance pressed on his mind.

She was, therefore, disposed to take advantage of one of those rare moments in the life of her busy husband.

Nick laid aside his book and turning smilingly to his wife, asked:

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because if you are not busy, you might give your evening to me and go to a private card party to which I have been invited."

"My dear," asked Nick, in mock severity, "have you taken to gambling?"

"No," she said, laughing. "I wouldn't have invited you if that were the case. You would have won all my money."

Nick smiled.

"Very well," he said. "I will take a night off and go with you. It has been many a long day since I could do so."

Highly pleased, Edith went off to prepare herself for the evening's entertainment, and shortly after she had left the room, Chick and Patsy entered to report on some small matter they had been engaged on and to receive further instructions.

"I'm going to take a night off, boys," said Nick. "And so you two youngsters can have an evening at your own disposal."

"Nothin' doin'?" asked Patsy.

"No," replied Nick. "I am going out with Edith this evening, and a rest will do none of us any harm."

Chick and Patsy, both young enough to find excitement the highest pleasure, turned away rather disappointed.

"Wait, boys," exclaimed Nick, putting his pipe aside and rising, "until I can get my hat and I'll go out with you, for I'm going to get shaved for the evening."

Calling to Edith that he would be back in a short time, he attempted to leave the room, but was detained by Edith, who came to the door to say:

"I fear it will be the last I will see of you for the evening."

"Oh, no. I will be back within half an hour," answered Nick.

"Chick," said Edith, "please see that the chief does come back in half an hour."

"I'll see to it, Mrs. Carter," replied Chick.

"Yes," chimed in Patsy, "we're taking orders from you to-night, Mrs. Carter, and if the chief bolts the track, both Chick and I will shoo him back."

The three detectives, with a laugh, left the room.

The shop to which Nick usually went to get shaved was in Columbus avenue, above Eighty-first street.

As the three were walking along Columbus avenue, after passing Seventy-seventh street, their attention was attracted by a scream of a woman on the opposite side of the street, where are the grounds surrounding the Museum of Natural History.

A rapid glance in that direction showed them that three men were attacking a woman who was desperately resisting their efforts.

Whether it was a bold and reckless attempt at highway robbery in the early evening, or a crime of deeper significance, the three detectives did not stop to consider, but, springing across the street, went to the rescue of the woman in distress.

Reaching the curbstone on that side of the street where the trouble was, each took in these facts at once: That the woman was young, was of more than usual beauty, and was dressed in costly attire; that a coach, drawn up to the curbstone nearby, was immediately driven off at great speed, the coachman lashing his horses in the most reckless manner; and, that on their coming, the three men who had attacked the woman immediately took to their heels, running up the avenue.

A policeman had come running at the same moment, one whom Nick knew and who knew Nick. Nick shouted to him:

"Look after the woman, officer, and we'll look after the men. Come, Chick, Patsy, after them."

Among all those who, as professionals or as amateurs, take part in the footraces of athletic games, none were fleet of foot than the three from whom the rascals who had attacked the woman tried to escape.

Always in training, the very work of their profession keeping them in practice, with no habits that were weakening, they were three models of health and strength.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that, putting forth their full power, the three rascals were rapidly gained upon by the three detectives.

Reaching the corner of Eighty-first street, the three flying men tried to take the advantage the structure of the elevated railroad station presented.

One dodged across the street before reaching the foot of the elevated railroad stairs, one dodged behind them, and the other attempted to cross diagonally from the corner.

The quick eye of Nick took all this in, and he shouted to his assistants:

"After the second, Chick; Patsy, take the third."

He himself dodged after the first man, springing with mighty leaps across the street.

While the three flying rascals had not separated by any understanding between themselves, yet it seemed that the three of them were of the same mind in an endeavor to run down Eighty-first street to the west.

So, when the three detectives, each following his man, had in such pursuit cleared the elevated railroad station, they saw that there was a clear race for them all down Eighty-first street.

Both of the men followed by Nick and Chick had endeavored to throw their pursuers off the track by doubling in and out of the two stairways on the right-hand side of the street, but Patsy's man had made a straight run down Eighty-first street, and thus it was that the lad was a little way in advance of Nick and Chick.

All of the three flying men were a hundred feet or more in advance of Patsy.

Near the western end of the block was a coach, the driver of which, seemingly, had stopped his horses and was standing in his box, looking back over the roof of his coach to watch the chase.

As the flying men neared him, he began to shout something which could not be understood by the detectives, but which was by the three flying men, for they immediately ran for the coach, and springing into it, closed the doors after them, while the coachman laid on his whip, driving away at all the speed he could command.

The effort to get into the coach had delayed them a little. Of this delay Patsy had taken advantage by an extra spurt, and had succeeded in reaching the rear of the coach just as it started off at full speed.

Unknown to the driver, as well as to those inside, Patsy had secured a firm hold on the window in the rear of the coach.

This was seen by both Nick and Chick, who were following after, rather losing ground than otherwise, when the chase became one of galloping horses rather than running men.

They kept up their speed, however, believing that, at least, they could keep the coach in sight, and that Patsy would not lose the advantage he had secured.

What Nick feared was that the three men within the

coach would leave it when a lead had been gained that would be impossible to overcome, and he called on Chick for another spurt.

But, on reaching West End avenue, a truck loaded with stone broke down at the corner, blocking the way on one side, and causing a throng of vehicles on the other which compelled the driver of the flying coach to pull up in spite of himself.

Nor could he by the exercise of his best skill escape from the tangle. Before he was quite aware of what was behind him, Patsy had climbed over the top of the coach and knocked him from the seat.

The men in the coach, with their heads out of the windows, were yelling at the driver to go on. Seeing that his progress was barred, they left the coach a few feet in advance of Nick and Chick, who had come up.

They darted off down West End avenue, followed by the two detectives, over whom they now had an advantage in the fact that they had had a rest while in the coach.

Patsy had jumped from the box of the coach and followed.

It was now a long chase from Eighty-first street to Sixty-first street, where West End avenue begins and Eleventh avenue ends.

As long as the race had been to the three detectives, this run of a mile down the avenue had winded the three rascals more than it had the others, and, in the latter part of the mile, they had lost ground rapidly.

Therefore they were only a short distance ahead of the detectives when they made their final effort to escape by dashing to the middle of the street and, climbing under and between the cars of a freight train standing there, tried to put that train between themselves and their pursuers.

In hot pursuit the three detectives went after them in the same manner, Nick and Chick undertaking to cross between the ends of cars over the couplings; but Patsy dove under one of the cars between the wheels.

At that very moment the train was started.

Patsy narrowly escaped being crushed by the wheels, but he gained a sure footing in time to see the three men dodge into a liquor saloon a door or two from the corner of Sixty-first street.

He gave the warning to Nick and Chick, and led the way to the saloon into which they had disappeared.

The three detectives entered on a run, revolvers drawn, to see the three men leaning against the bar utterly exhausted, and unable to answer the questions which the barkeeper and the proprietor were asking.

The moment the three detectives appeared the three men made a bolt for the rear of the saloon, but Nick, with leveled revolvers, ordered them to halt.

The men did so, and Chick and Patsy, springing forward, put them under arrest.

The saloonkeeper was disposed to resent the arrest, but, on learning that it was Nick Carter and his men who had made it, became quiet.

Nick took a long breath.

"A pretty good run, boys," he said. "A good two miles."

Taking his watch from his pocket, he said: "And we made it in twelve minutes."

The three rascals were nearly pumped of wind, and almost helpless, but the three detectives rapidly regained their strength.

"Well, boys," said Nick, "we'll each take a man and land them in the station-house in Sixty-eighth street. There we will learn what they were up to."

By this time the three were submissive and made no resistance to being led out.

At the station-house, on presenting their prisoners, it was learned that an attempt had been made to abduct the young lady by the three rascals. Why, and with what end in view, was not apparent.

Questioned, the three men sullenly declined to answer.

"The father of the young lady will be here presently," said the sergeant in charge. "He was here, and I told him that the officer who had taken the young lady to her home had reported that Nick Carter and his two assistants, Chick and Patsy, were in pursuit of the three men, and I said, 'If they are in pursuit, they'll get some or all of them, you may be sure, for they never lose their men.' He said he would come back again."

"Who was the young lady?" asked Nick.

"Miss Grace Amory, daughter of Amory, the banker, living in Seventy-seventh street."

"Has he or she no suspicion as to this abduction?"

"No," replied the sergeant, eyeing the three rascals before him, keenly, "he thinks that it was a mere effort to take possession of her and demand money for her release."

Nick suddenly faced the three prisoners, and as suddenly asked the question:

"Who hired you to nip this woman?"

The three made no reply, but the expressions of their faces assured Nick that some one stood behind them, as employing them for the job.

Nick did not pursue the question, for his end was gained in the asking.

Mr. Amory, a portly, white-haired and white-whiskered man of sixty-five, entered at this moment, and became quite excited on learning the three men who had attacked his daughter had been caught.

At Nick's suggestion, when he could stop the thanks the old gentleman was determined to give him, Mr.

Amory made the required charge, and the three prisoners were locked up.

To Mr. Amory, Nick said:

"I am satisfied, sir, that there is a scheme to seize your daughter in which these men were mere instruments. I advise you to have the comings and goings of your daughter carefully watched. She should not venture out alone."

To Chick and Patsy he said:

"I have yet time to get shaved and meet Edith."

They then left the station-house on their way to the barber-shop.

CHAPTER II.

ARIZONA JAKE APPEARS.

The three detectives had only walked a few blocks up Columbus avenue when, on the corner of a cross street, they saw a man stagger out of the rear door of a saloon on the opposite corner, bleeding from wounds in his head and neck, and fall to the sidewalk.

The noise of a disturbance within the saloon reached their ears.

Each with the same impulse, the three sprang across the street and entered the saloon, to find a fight in progress, in which one man was wielding a huge knife, apparently defending himself from the assaults of two others, each with knives in their hands.

The loungers of the saloon who had no part in the fight, instead of endeavoring to stop it, were busy in trying to keep out of the way of the combatants, while the barkeepers had mounted the bar and were shouting at the tops of their voices to the men to stop, and calling "police!"

Taking the situation in at a glance, Nick sprang forward and catching the man who was defending himself, flung him to one side, while Chick and Patsy each sprang at a man, attacking and disarming them.

"What is the meaning of this fight?" asked Nick.

"We don't know," replied one of the barkeepers, both of whom had now climbed down from the bar. "It began all of a sudden."

The man who had been thrown aside by Nick, gaining his feet, exclaimed:

"What in blazes are you interfering for?"

He made a rush with a desperate lunge at Nick, who had turned his back to him to further question the barkeepers.

The enraged man would have succeeded in plunging his knife into Nick's back, had not Chick and Patsy, dropping their men, leaped forward and seized the man.

Chick undertook to take the knife from the man, who, he soon found, was a fellow of superior strength. It be-

came a severe struggle between the two, which quickly resulted in the knife falling from the hands of the man, though he did not give up the struggle in the loss of his knife.

As Patsy attempted to pick up the knife and put it out of harm's way, he suddenly cried out:

"Look out for yourself, Chick. The skunk is trying to gouge you."

But Chick had already observed the purpose of the man, now so desperate as to be little more than a wild beast.

Protecting his face, he went at the man, getting inside of his arms and, taking him by the throat, he not only choked him until he was black in the face, but, fairly lifting him from his feet, threw him over backwards, falling on him.

It was an extraordinary exhibition of strength, which surprised Nick, as familiar as he was with the great muscular power of his chief aid.

As for Patsy, who gloried in the strength and courage of Chick, he danced about the floor in great glee, shouting to the man who had been so overcome by Chick:

"Now will you be good?"

The two men who had been interrupted in their attack on the fallen man made an attempt to attack Nick. But, at the moment of their offer, one of the loungers cried out:

"Have yer got no sense? Don't yer know that yer up against Nick Carter and his men?"

The two men stopped short, hesitated an instant, looked at each other, and then made a sudden bolt to the rear of the saloon, escaping into the street from the door that was there.

They had hardly disappeared when a policeman came in, bringing with him the man who had been wounded in the early part of the fight, and whose coming from the saloon covered with blood had been seen by the three detectives.

Recognizing Nick Carter, the officer said that, if the detective would watch his man, he would go to the signal box and send for a surgeon.

In the meantime, Chick had risen from the floor, believing his man to have been subdued. But that man was one of the kind who do not know when they are beaten. No sooner was he on his feet than he made another rush at Chick, striking wildly as he did so.

Chick defended himself from the rush and Nick, stepping forward, let fly one of those swings of his which, when they landed, put the man they struck out of business for the time being.

Although it toppled the man over, it did not put him to sleep, and Nick, reaching down, lifted the man up and said:

"If you don't know when you have got enough we'll put the irons on you."

A glimmer of sense seemed now to enter the man's head, and he asked:

"Detectives?"

"That's what we are," replied Nick.

"I'm done," said the man. "I thought you were more of the same gang."

He went to the bar, saying:

"Let's have some liquor and then I'll be going about my business."

"No," said Nick, "you'll not go anywhere till you tell us what all this is about."

"You stay by your business," said the man, sullenly, "and I'll stay by mine."

"That's just what I'm doing," said Nick, "when I make you give an account of yourself."

His two aides saw Nick give a slight start as he had looked keenly into the face of the man he was talking to. He added:

"You're not going to leave me here until you tell me what all this is about."

"Say, pardner," said the man, reaching his hand behind him, "I'm one of those coyotes wot travels free when I sets out to."

His hand had not found what it had reached out for, and he said:

"Gimme my knife. I lost my guns down at that other boozing ranch, and now my knife's gone."

"It'll stay gone, Arizona Jake," said Nick.

The man turned with a quick start, peering eagerly into the face of Nick and exclaiming:

"Who the devil are you who calls me by that name here?"

"I'm Nick Carter, and I've had you in my grip before."

The man bent forward with increased interest, saying, almost with held breath:

"I'll be hanged if it ain't the little terror."

He looked around in a sort of a puzzled, dazed way, and said, addressing the room, apparently:

"Gem'men, this is the only man that ever downed Arizona Jake in a fair fight with guns. It was in Deadwood City."

"There's some one else who downed you," exclaimed a lounging, "and he did it just now. And it's him over there."

The lounging pointed to Chick.

"Him!" exclaimed the Westerner, scornfully.

"Yes," said Nick. "You'd be a child in his hands, Arizona Jake. But tell me about this affair to-night."

"There isn't much to it," replied Arizona Jake. "I was taking a roll about town, when I fell in with two strangers; we got to this place, and were flingin' in a

bit, when another one come up and began to tell 'em about some fellows that hadn't got a girl that they'd been after.

"I was tellin' em it was small business that they were in, when one of them reached for my wad, that I had in my hand, and the fight begun."

"The fellow that reached for it got cut; that's him over there, and if you fellows hadn't put your fists in, I'd cut the other two just as bad."

By this time an ambulance surgeon arrived; after examining the wounds of the man, he pronounced them not serious and dressed them.

The policeman, who was disposed to make an arrest, was for taking Arizona Jake to the station-house, but Nick interfered, saying that the worst that could be charged against the Westerner was that he had defended himself against attack; that there was a prisoner in the wounded man, but that the men most wanted were those who had escaped, as they were doubtless connected in some way with the attempt to abduct the young woman in the earlier part of the evening.

Before the police officer carried off his other prisoner, Nick made an effort to obtain from this man some information concerning the abduction.

The wounded man declared that he knew little or nothing about it, saying that he was in their company only through accident. He knew the two men to be the members of a Tenth avenue gang, and pretty tough sort of people.

As to the abduction, he knew no more than he had heard pass between the two, as the Westerner had said, but from it he had heard enough to know that they had been hired by a swell to seize the girl and carry her to a certain point on Fordham Heights. Beyond that he knew nothing.

As to the charge of the Westerner, he said that it was all a mistake on Arizona Jake's part, as he was merely fooling, and had no intention of taking the money.

He was taken away to the station-house, however, by the policeman.

After cautioning Arizona Jake against the men he was likely to fall in with in the City of New York, and advising him to be careful of his acquaintances, Nick went out, followed by Chick and Patsy.

On the sidewalk he said to Patsy:

"I wish, Patsy, that you would go back to Mrs. Carter and tell her that I have been detained, but that I am going now to be shaved, and will soon be home, but that she had better go to the party without waiting for me. I will join her there late, and, if you will, Patsy, you can walk around with her to the house."

Patsy went off. To Chick he said, in answer to his question as to Arizona Jake:

"Arizona Jake is what they call in the West a bad man. He is a gambler who fights on the slightest provocation, but, beyond taking long chances at cards and being too quick at the trigger and with the bowie knife, nothing is known against him. He is not a thief, nor a road agent."

They continued on their way to the barber-shop, where Nick was finally shaved.

Leaving the shop, Nick said:

"That information given by the man who was wounded seems to be important. I thought from the beginning that the men in that attempted abduction were engaged for the job. We must inform Mr. Amory and see if we cannot get from him some inkling as to the man at the back of it."

Accordingly, they made their way to Seventy-seventh street and to Mr. Amory's house.

On informing the old gentleman as to what they had learned from the wounded man, Mr. Amory said:

"I cannot for the life of me imagine who the man can be. Miss Amory is quite a young lady, who has been but little in society, and who is domestic in her habits. You will perhaps pardon a father in saying that she is not without charms and beauty, and, though she has been out but a single season, she has had many admirers, but none of whom has found favor with her."

The old gentleman hesitated a moment and continued:

"Perhaps I do wrong in saying that there is one man who has been very persistent in his attentions. For him Miss Amory took so great a dislike and was so distressed by the persistence of his attentions that I was compelled to interfere and intimate to the gentleman that they must cease."

"I should be very reluctant, indeed, to think that, however angered he might have been by my words, or disappointed by the manner in which Miss Amory had received his attentions, he could have been guilty of such an act."

"He is a man with whom I have done business and whom I have always found upright and straightforward in his business dealings."

"I have heard that his private life left something to be desired, but of that I have no real knowledge."

"Mr. Amory," said Nick, "from the moment that I interfered in this affair I have believed, as I told you before, that the men we caught were mere instruments of some one else. If some one has not employed them, then we must go back to the theory that your daughter was seized purely as a money speculation. Now, sir, is your wealth so great and your reputation for it so extended as to make your daughter a desirable prize as a hostage held for a great sum?"

"There are men living on this block," replied Mr. Amory, "who have greater wealth, greater reputation for wealth, and daughters quite as charming as my own."

Chick here interfered to say that, perhaps, Miss Amory herself might give a clue if she were asked.

"Miss Amory," said Mr. Amory, "was greatly shocked by the occurrence, and retired to her room when arriving at home, but, perhaps, she is sufficiently recovered to see you."

He left the room, and shortly after returned with a young girl not more than nineteen, fragile in appearance, and showing in her manner much nervousness.

"Miss Amory," said Mr. Amory, "has not fully recovered from her shock, but, learning that Mr. Carter and his brave aides, who had so gallantly interfered in her behalf, were in the house, she insisted on coming down to make her own personal thanks."

The young lady stepped forward and warmly thanked both the detectives, indeed, so warmly as to rather embarrass them, and Chick said:

"It was all in the way of our business, Miss Amory, for we would have done it for any other woman so placed."

"I am sure of it," replied Miss Amory, "and that is what makes it so gallant."

"Certain things have developed, Miss Amory," said Nick, "which lead us to believe that some one person who is not known in the affair was responsible for this attempt upon you. Have you known or met or had relations of any kind with a man whom you could suspect of desiring to take possession of you?"

Miss Amory looked up at Nick with a frightened air, and finally said:

"I'm afraid to express my thoughts—my suspicion."

"And why so?" asked Nick.

"Because I know so little, and, at the very best, it is merely guesswork."

She turned to her father and said:

"I have not told you, for I was afraid it would anger you, that Mr. Macklyn was at Mrs. Emmet's house when I got there this evening."

Mr. Amory started angrily, and asked, sharply:

"Mrs. Emmet sent a note asking you to call, did she not?"

"Yes; in connection with some church charitable work."

"Do you mean to infer that Mrs. Emmet asked you there so as to have you meet Mr. Macklyn?"

"I do not know as to that," replied Miss Amory. "I only know he was there when I arrived, and that he knew that I was coming."

"Who is this Mrs. Emmet?" asked Nick.

"She is a lady who is a great friend of my mother, and one very active in the affairs of the church we attend," replied Miss Amory.

"What relations has she with this Mr. Macklyn?" asked Nick.

"He is a cousin of her husband," replied Miss Amory.

"Mr. Amory?" asked Nick, "is Mr. Macklyn the man of whom you spoke a moment or two ago?"

"Yes; he is the man to whom my daughter took so great a dislike."

"Then," said Nick, turning again to Miss Amory, "your meeting must have been embarrassing."

"It was," replied the young lady, "but Mr. Macklyn relieved the embarrassment by leaving almost immediately after I had come."

"And it was while on your way from Mrs. Emmet's house to your own home that you were attacked by these ruffians?"

"Yes."

"How long was the attack after Mr. Macklyn had left the house of Mrs. Emmet?"

"Perhaps an hour."

"Did Mrs. Emmet have anything to say about Mr. Macklyn?"

"No; her talk was purely about the affair concerning which she wanted to see me."

"Is Mr. Macklyn the only person whom you could suspect of being engaged in such an affair against you?"

"I do not want to even think of him as such a person," was the reply of the young lady.

Nick rose from his chair, saying to Mr. Amory:

"I advise Miss Amory to be exceedingly careful since this attempt has been made. It is likely to occur again."

The two detectives now took their leave, and as they stepped through the door, they saw a man run quickly across the street from under the cover of the steps of a house two doors below, and disappear behind the museum opposite.

"Come, Chick," cried Nick, "we must find out who that was."

"Chief," laughed Chick, as they ran hastily across the street, "this is a great night off for you."

CHAPTER III.

NOT A FRUITLESS CHASE.

To this Nick made no other reply than that it was suspicious that a man should be watching them in their call upon Mr. Amory.

The one they pursued had a very decided lead, and was making his escape under the cover of the great building behind which he had run.

By the time Nick and Chick reached the corner of the building, he was not to be seen.

At that corner the two detectives halted, and Nick said:

"Chick, you go one way, and I will go the other. If this man is hugging the building as a means of escaping us, we will catch him."

Rapidly the two ran in different directions, to meet at the rear of the building without having come across their man. As they met, however, they saw a figure, dimly in the dark, escaping in the direction of Eighty-first street, not by the paths, but across the lawn. They went after him at full speed.

There was shrubbery between them and the flying man, so that they ran but a few steps before he was out of sight.

When they reached Eighty-first street they were confused by the fact that not less than five men were making their way from the grounds to the street at different points.

Stopping a moment to observe the five men, they hit upon the one who seemed to be most anxious to make progress, and, dropping the others, they followed this one, who increased his pace, until, reaching the foot of the elevated railway steps, he bounded up them with all the speed he could command.

Having learned by previous experience what an excellent place an elevated railroad station is for a man to escape in, Nick sent Chick to the other steps and hastily ascended one pair, while Chick crossed to the other.

As Chick was part way up his steps a man appeared at the head, who, seeing Chick ascending, turned quickly and ran back.

Nick, standing at the ticket window, saw him rapidly cross the station and run down the stairs he, Nick, had just ascended.

Nick sprang in pursuit, jumping at the conclusion that the man acting so mysteriously was the man they were after.

Chick arrived at the head of the stairs in time to see Nick disappear, and he turned, running hastily down the steps he had just ascended, to see the man running down the other steps, leap over the side and hasten to Columbus avenue, where he boarded a car bound up-town at full speed, and really at the risk of his life.

The two detectives hastened to the corner, but realized on reaching there that further pursuit was useless, since they could not overtake the trolley car, now too far ahead of them.

Two men stood on the corner, looking after the car with interest. As Nick turned to Chick to say that they had lost their man, one of the men said to the other:

"What's the matter with Macklyn? He went by here as if he had bees in his trousers, and made a flying leap for that car. Is it a case of d-t's?"

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"I don't know what's the matter with him, I'm sure," replied the other. "It was a very strange action, and not at all like Macklyn."

Nick faced the man and said:

"Pardon me, was that Mr. Charles Macklyn, the broker, who boarded that car so recklessly?"

"Yes," replied the other, "that was Macklyn, and it was a most stupid thing for him to do. I should say, if I didn't know him better, that he was full of jig water."

After making a comment on such foolhardiness, Nick slipped his arm through that of Chick's and led him away. As he did so, he said:

"Though we did lose our man, Chick, yet, after all, we got all that we hoped to get in following him."

"Yes," replied Chick, "we wanted to find out who the man was, and we got his name."

"And it was Macklyn."

After a moment or two, Nick said:

"The fact that it was Macklyn, and that he was watching us while in the Amory house, makes it pretty suspicious for Mr. Macklyn. Chick, you'll have to follow that up and find out what you can about Mr. Macklyn."

"All right," said Chick, "but I think what you want to do now is to keep your engagement with Mrs. Carter and take that night off which, if it keeps up, will be as busy as any night you've had."

The two laughed as Nick said that he was going home at once to dress, and would follow Edith to the house where she was to go.

They had not gone very far down the avenue in the direction of the street in which Nick lived when Chick's quick eye caught sight of Patsy on the other side of the avenue, dodging along the gutter from post to post, evidently following somebody.

Looking ahead, they saw the man whom Arizona Jake had cut, with his head bound up, arm in arm with Arizona Jake himself.

"Now what is the meaning of that?" said Nick.

"I'm blessed if I know," replied Chick. "It's a queer combination, after what has happened."

"We must follow it up," said Nick.

"How about your night off?"

"Oh, they'll turn in somewhere soon," said Nick. "It won't take long."

Continuing on the same side of the street, they hurried along, keeping Patsy in sight.

Arizona Jake and the man with the bound-up head continued down the avenue for several blocks, when they turned into a corner saloon.

Nick and Chick hurriedly crossed the avenue, and caught Patsy just as he was attempting to enter after them.

"What is this, Patsy?" asked Nick.

"I'm hanged if I know, chief," replied Patsy. "I was coming back from leaving Mrs. Carter at that house where she went to, and I ran up against that pair swinging along, chummy as two toads in a gutter. So I just followed."

"Well," said Nick, "we must find out the meaning of it."

The three entered the saloon to see the two at the bar, Arizona Jake demanding that the best in the house be set up, and declaring that the best was none too good for the man he had been trying to make mincemeat of.

The three had no sooner entered than Arizona Jake saw them.

With a wild whoop he welcomed them, insisting that the three should join them at the bar.

In response to Nick's question as to how it was that the two were together again, the man who had been arrested, and whose head was yet bound up, said that Arizona Joe had gone to the station-house and secured his release.

From Arizona Jake's explanation, it seemed that after Nick and his two aides had left them, Arizona Jake had concluded that he had been too hasty with his charge against the man. He had learned from a bystander that the man was known as Jim Colton, and was a rather good fellow than otherwise, though prone to get into bad company.

As the bystander vouched for Colton that he was not a thief, Arizona Jake, moved by generous impulse, had hunted up the policeman who had made the arrest and, with him, had gone to the station-house, where, pleading for Colton and declaring that he had made a mistake in charging him with robbery, secured his release.

This done, in his own picturesque language he had "taken Colton for a roll about town," as some sort of compensation for the cutting he had given him.

Nick questioned Colton as to the men he was with when the outbreak had taken place.

Colton said that one of them was a man named Andrew Coulter, whose occupation he did not know, but he did know that he had great influence over a gang in Tenth avenue known as the "Black Cats," and that that influence was supposed to come through his intimacy with a powerful politician in the city.

Colton said that his acquaintance with Coulter was slight; that a short time previously, while Arizona Jake and himself were together, they had met a man known to him as Harry Hunton, and by him they had been led to the place where the fight had occurred and where they had met Coulter, the place being one of his haunts on the avenue.

Colton also told Nick, apparently quite anxious to placate so famous a man as the great detective, that while

in the station-house, after his arrest, he had had a talk with the three men whom Nick, Chick and Patsy had arrested earlier in the evening; that their names were Fred Smithers, Al Baker and Tim Sullivan; that they were all members of the "Black Cat" gang; and that they had admitted to him that they had endeavored to abduct Grace Amory, and would have done so but for the interference of Nick Carter and his aides; that they had been hired to do so, having been promised a considerable sum on their successful performance; that, while they would not mention names, Colton was satisfied that they had been instructed by Coulter, who was acting for some person in the dark.

All of this was most important to Nick, as it bore out what had been his instantaneous belief on arresting the men.

After what had developed subsequent to that arrest, in the call upon Mr. Amory and his daughter, and the chase after the man who had escaped by a trolley car on Columbus avenue, suspicion naturally went to Macklyn as the man in the dark.

Chick expressed this suspicion in words.

"Yes," replied Nick, "suspicion naturally jumps to that man. The trouble is that there does not seem to be motive enough in his mere rejection by Miss Amory, coupled with his standing in social and business circles, to justify the belief that he would resort to such lawless measures. The two things don't seem to gee."

Before reply could be made by any one, the door of the saloon opened and a man came in, who pushed his way through a little knot at the bar, addressing the barkeeper nearest the door in a low tone.

Instantly Chick said:

"I say, chief, that is the man we followed and who escaped by the trolley car."

"Macklyn?" asked Nick. "Oh, you must be mistaken, Chick."

"If I am, I am," replied Chick, "but I don't think I am."

"That man?" said Colton, who had listened to this exchange between Nick and Chick. "I don't know who he is, or what his name is, but I do know he is a great friend of Coulter and of the big politician who is Coulter's friend, for I've seen them together a good many times on Broadway, down in the Tenderloin."

While this had been going on, Patsy had slipped up to that end of the bar where the stranger was talking with the barkeeper, and heard enough to know that the stranger was inquiring for Andrew Coulter, and had received the reply that Coulter had not been seen in that place since late in the afternoon, but was quite likely to be found at that hour at a saloon further up the avenue.

Patsy came back to Nick and Chick and reported what he had overheard.

Nick said to Colton:

"That confirms your story, Colton. The man is now looking for Coulter."

He thought a moment, and then said to Chick:

"Chick, one way his looking for Coulter might be taken to support your idea that the man is Macklyn, but, after the failure of the enterprise he was engaged in, would he be on the avenue so publicly?"

"He might, if he didn't think he was suspected," replied Chick.

"He knows he was followed by us," replied Nick, "for he ran away from us."

"And doubtless thinks that he got away without its being discovered who he was."

"Perhaps," said Nick, thoughtfully.

At this moment the stranger turned to leave the saloon, without having even looked to see who it was at the other end of the bar.

"Anyhow," said Nick, "we must follow him."

"How about Mrs. Carter and your night off, chief?" laughed Chick.

"Oh, well, we'll only follow up this fellow a little while to see if it is Macklyn," said Nick. "I can join Mrs. Carter before the evening's half over, anyhow."

To Patsy he said:

"You take the lead, Patsy, and don't let him slip you. We'll follow you."

By the time this conversation was ended they were out on the street, and Patsy was close on the heels of the stranger.

CHAPTER IV.

NICK GETS A VOLUNTEER RECRUIT.

The pursuit led the three detectives to several saloons, in each one of which the stranger made the same inquiries for Coulter, in each instance being sent to another saloon.

The manner of the stranger showed that he had not the slightest idea that he was followed.

The plan adopted was to send Patsy into the saloon, while Nick and Chick, concealing themselves without, watched to see the direction the man took on leaving the saloon.

Finally, as this stranger turned into one saloon, he was met at the door by a man whom he greeted, and who responded to his greeting cordially. The two entered the saloon together.

"I know that man who went in with him," said Nick. "And he is a perfectly straight man. Patsy, go in as usual and see what he does. I'll lay back and see if I cannot get a chance to talk with this man. When our

man comes out, Chick, follow him, but leave a trail for me that I can pick you up."

They waited perhaps five minutes, when the stranger came out of the door hurriedly and alone, but followed closely by Patsy.

Patsy and Chick started in pursuit at once, while Nick slipped into the saloon.

It did not take Nick long to learn from his acquaintance that the man he had met was indeed Macklyn.

"How well do you know this man Macklyn?" asked Nick.

"Oh, I know him quite well," replied the acquaintance. "He is a member of the same athletic club as I am, and we have served on several committees together."

"What sort of man is he?" asked Nick.

"Oh, he's all right, I guess," replied the other. "I don't know him in business, for his line is a good ways from mine. Socially, he seems to be a very nice fellow. He's a determined sort of a fellow, and when he gets his head set on anything he's pretty obstinate."

The man laughed a little and went on:

"There's a good deal of a bulldog about Macklyn. If he once takes hold, he never lets go. He will have his own way, and that has made him a little unpopular in the club. He's heady, you know, and if he's on a committee with anybody he's the committee, and the rest followers, or they've got to get out. He must have things his way, and they say that that is the secret of his success in his business."

"Do you know anything about his private life?" asked Nick.

"I'd rather not say anything about it," replied the other. "I know nothing except by hearsay. Well, I did know a little something, where he was mixed up with a girl, in which it seemed as if he wasn't quite right in it. But even then, I don't know enough to talk about it."

He suddenly faced Nick, saying:

"Oh, I say, Carter, it's too bad of you, for I forget that you are a detective. You've a purpose in asking about Macklyn?"

"Yes," replied Nick, "but a very mild one. In fact, you might call it curiosity rather than purpose."

"Is there any charge against Macklyn?"

"I know of no charge that has been made against him," replied Nick, preparing to leave the saloon.

But on the street, taking up the trail Chick had left behind him and hurrying after, Nick said to himself:

"Every step and every bit of information seems to strengthen the suspicion that Macklyn is the man in the dark, who hired those fellows to abduct Grace Amory."

Two blocks above he came on Chick outside of a saloon, who told him that the man had gone into that place.

"You were right, Chick," said Nick. "The man is

Macklyn. I learned that from the one he spoke to. I learned something more, showing that Macklyn is just the kind of a fool who won't take no when a girl gives it to him. If he can't get his ends by fair means, he will by foul."

"Then your suspicions as to Macklyn being the man in the dark are strengthened?" asked Chick.

"They are; so much so, that I believe that Macklyn is now hunting Coulter on this very business. I mean to see it out."

"And take a night off?" laughed Chick.

Nick laughed, but made no reply. Indeed, he had no time to do so, for a man whom both immediately recognized as being the one called by Colton, Harry Hunton, came hastily out of the door and hurried up the street.

"Shall I follow him?" asked Chick.

Nick was about to reply that perhaps it would be better to do so when Patsy came from the saloon, and, seeing that Chick was about to start after the man, called him back.

"It's all right, Chick," said Patsy. "The guy is going to get trace of Coulter, and his nibs inside is going to wait there for him to come back."

"You overheard that, then?" asked Nick.

"I got right next to them," replied Patsy. "His nibs nearly scared the life of Hunton by talking about the nipping scheme out loud. He wanted to know why it didn't come off. Hunton grabbed him and rushed him back to a pile of fizz boxes and said, 'You must be dotty to give it out like that.' I got behind the boxes and heard Hunton say that he didn't know much about it, but that Coulter had told him that Nick Carter had happened along just as they had nipped the gal and broke it up."

"Is Macklyn still looking for Coulter?" asked Nick.

"Macklyn—is that the name of his nibs?" asked Patsy.

"Yes," replied Nick; "I found that out after you left."

"Yes," said Patsy, "that guy Hunton is trying to find out where Coulter is, so that Macklyn can get to him right away."

This conversation had taken place on the sidewalk immediately in front of the saloon, and thus it was that they were greeted by Arizona Jake and Colton, who came up still on their roll about town, as Arizona Jake called it.

The Westerner was boisterously jovial in his greeting of them, and insisted that the party should go in and drink wine with him.

"Come in!" he cried, "and I'll show you how we drink in the West. Nobody to have a drink unless he's knocked off the head of the bottle with his gun; then the whole bottle is his."

This would have been entirely destructive of Nick's plan, and he was at difficulty in preventing Arizona Jake

not only from taking in the whole party, but from going into the saloon himself.

In time, however, he did make Arizona Jake understand that he was watching a man with a view to finding out what he was up to.

"Why don't you go in and smoke him out?" asked the Westerner.

"Because it isn't time yet," replied Nick. "If we were to take him now we'd only have him under suspicion. I want to get him foul and punish him for a dirty, mean business I am sure he is in."

"What's he up to? What's he been doing?" asked Arizona Jake, in rapid succession.

"Something you don't like any more than the rest of us do," replied Nick.

Nick well knew the man to whom he was talking. He knew the kind of man he was and the notions of right and wrong that he held.

He knew that while Arizona Jake would not hesitate to fleece any one that he got into a game of cards with, or to shoot his way out of any difficulty that he might get into; that he held human life as cheaply, and perhaps more cheaply, than the cattle he had commenced life by guarding, yet, that he held a woman as the most sacred thing he knew, and would go as quickly to a defense of one in distress as he would to his own.

He knew, too, that on his telling of what Macklyn was suspected, Arizona Jake's indignation would be sent up to the boiling point.

In short, Nick knew the rough plainsman of the West through and through. So he said:

"Jake, when you had your knife out down at that saloon where we first met you to-night, what started the row?"

"Why," replied Arizona Jake, "I was talking pretty free about what I thought was some dirty things they said they'd been into."

"And what were they?"

"Why, a lot of coyotes had been steered by one of them to lasso a woman who wasn't doing anything to them."

"And you had been expressing your opinion about the business?" asked Nick.

"Yes," replied Jake; "I told them what I thought about it. I said I didn't think much of a fellow who wanted dirty business done, and then sent somebody else to do it. And I told them I didn't know anything more low down than interfering with women."

"Jake," said Nick, "suppose you were sweet on a girl and you declared yourself, and she should tell you that she liked you and thank you for liking her, but she couldn't hitch with you, what would you do?"

"Do? Do what any other gem'men would do. Dis-

card, draw to my best, and if I didn't fill lay down my cards and pass the bet."

"Wouldn't you draw your gun and make her hitch, anyhow?"

"See here, Nick Carter, I'm a gem'men, I am. If ye think I'd do such a dirty piece of business as that, I'll have to give ye a lesson as to the kind of man I am."

He looked angrily at Nick, to see him smiling, and went on:

"No, sir; a woman's got a right to choose. That's her right, and when she does, a man's got a right to stand pat and obey, take his medicine and be a man and a gem'men."

"Then what do you think of one when he's had 'No!' said to him who goes off in the dark, hires some others to seize the girl and carry her off where he can force her consent?"

"He's a skunk and a rattlesnake."

"Well, that's just exactly what we think the man we're watching has done to-night."

Arizona Jake pulled from his pocket two large revolvers, with which he had provided himself some way since Nick had parted with him before, and said:

"Let's go and put holes in him."

"No," said Nick; "we'll have to have the proof first, and that's what I want to get now."

"When ye've got your man," said Arizona Jake, "it's a good plan to get him dead first and get yer proof afterward."

This remark made those who had been listening to the queer conversation laugh, but Patsy, who had been closely watching all the time, gave a signal of the return of the man Hunton, and the little group scattered in such a way as not to excite Hunton's observation, Nick pulling Arizona Jake with him into concealment.

Arizona Jake, however, had recognized in the newcomer the one who had first attacked him in the saloon.

In a moment his knife was out, and he made a spring forward toward the man.

Fortunately, Hunton had just turned to enter the saloon, and, therefore, did not see the movement of the Westerner.

Nick sprang as quickly after Arizona Jake, and, catching him by the arm, said in his ear:

"See here, Jake, don't spoil all my well-laid plans by such nonsense."

"But that's the coyote who first drew on me."

"I know," replied Nick; "he's tied up with that gang some way. I'm the boss here, and you must follow my lead."

"I sabe," replied Arizona Jake, putting his knife back into his belt under his coat.

While this was going on Patsy had again slipped into

the saloon. He managed to get close enough to hear Hunton tell Macklyn that Coulter was to be found in a place in Eighth avenue, not far from Twenty-third street; that he had taken himself there because of the excitement in that neighborhood following the attempt to seize Grace Amory.

Patsy immediately came out to report this to Nick, and to say, as well, that Macklyn had said that he would go there at once to see Coulter.

"Well, then, boys," said Nick, addressing Chick and Patsy, "we may as well go right there to that place ahead of him. Then we'll be ready for him when he comes."

"You don't think he'll jump the track, going there?" asked Patsy.

"No," replied Nick, "and if he does he will jump out of any reason for our following him."

The three detectives made a movement as if to start, but were detained by Arizona Jake, who said:

"Here, I've got into this outfit, and I'm goin' to see it out. I'm goin' with you."

Nick hesitated a moment, fearing that the Westerner would be unmanageable and an obstruction in the fine work they were engaged on.

But Patsy, to whom Arizona Jake was a delight, pleaded for him, saying:

"Let him go, chief, and if we get into a fight, he'll be one more gun."

"A brace of them, 'youngster,'" said Arizona Jake. "And the bad man from Red Gulch will keep his end up, you bet."

Chick joined in the plea, for there was something humorous to him in the idea of a tough Western plainsman doing detective work in New York City. Besides, Arizona Jake had heartily and frankly attached himself to the party.

"Very well, then," said Nick, "come along, but you must obey orders as promptly and as readily as Chick and Patsy do."

"I sabe," replied Arizona Jake, highly delighted that he was permitted to be one of what he called "Nick Carter's outfit."

They took Colton with them out of the district as a matter of precaution, though they left him out of harm's way at a place in Eighth avenue, some blocks from the place whither they were going.

CHAPTER V. AN IMPORTANT TALK.

The place in Eighth avenue where Macklyn had been sent, both a drinking saloon and a restaurant, was a favorite resort of a number of prominent politicians, and was frequented by Coulter when he wanted to get away from the members of the "Black Cat" gang.

As the "Nick Carter outfit," as Arizona Jake called it, reached the front of this place Chick said:

"I hadn't any idea this was the place."

"Do you know it?" asked Nick.

"Yes," replied Chick. "It's respectable enough, and is one that a good many rounders and sports come to for late suppers. Up on the second floor there are a number of private supper rooms."

"Private supper rooms?" repeated Nick.

"All perfectly straight, chief," replied Chick. "They won't let anything go on there that's wrong, except, perhaps, a little poker among themselves. But no women are allowed to go upstairs into those private rooms."

"You seem to be well up on the place," said Nick.

"I am," replied Chick. "I come here quite frequently. There's a waiter in there that looks so much like me that he might be taken for my brother."

Chick stopped suddenly, and, looking at Nick, said:

"We've got to hear what they say, haven't we?"

"Yes, if we can," replied Nick.

"Then wait a moment here."

He dashed off and into the restaurant, while Nick led the other two to the corner, from which point they could observe all who entered the place and at the same time conceal themselves from view, if necessity should demand.

They had waited perhaps ten minutes, when a waiter from the restaurant presented himself to them.

Arizona Jake, to whom this patient waiting had become tiresome, hailed the appearance of the waiter as a diversion from the dullness.

"Waitah!" he exclaimed, giving a wink to Patsy, to whom evidently he had taken a great fancy, "set 'em up; two bots of fizz and a highball."

Drawing his revolvers, he leveled them at the waiter, saying:

"I'll take off the tops of them ears if you don't have them here in two minutes by Patsy's watch."

To his surprise, the waiter flung himself inside of his arms, and grasping them, crossed them up above his head, and presented the muzzle of a revolver squarely at his face.

The grasp in which he was held was that of iron, from which he could not release himself. Looking at the man who had so suddenly seized him, he saw that he was laughing good-humoredly, while both Nick and Patsy were shaking their sides over the surprise of the Westerner.

It did not take Arizona Jake long to discover that the waiter who had such astonishing strength was none other but Chick.

"My bluff's called," he said, with a hearty roar of

laughter. "I'll lay my hand down. What have yer got them things on for?"

Before Chick could reply Nick said:

"Is Coulter in there?"

"Yes," replied Chick. "I've staked the waiter that I told you looked like me, to give me his jacket and apron and get out for an hour or two."

At this moment Patsy, who had been keeping close watch on all comers, told the party that Macklyn was approaching.

Chick slipped quickly back into the restaurant, and the three took themselves out of sight.

As soon as Macklyn had entered the saloon, Nick told Patsy to follow him in, saying:

"Macklyn has not yet dropped to you, and you are the best one to get on the watch of him."

"Let me go with the youngster," said Arizona Jake.

"No," said Nick; "one of the men in there is one with whom you were fighting when we ran against you. He would drop to you the moment he laid eyes on you. Our time for interfering hasn't come yet."

"I sabe," said Arizona Jake.

There was quite a long wait for Nick and his companion, the plainsman, before Patsy hurried up to them to say that Chick had been waiting on the party, among which Coulter and Macklyn had been sitting, and that Chick had given him the signal that Coulter and Macklyn were going upstairs into one of the private rooms for a talk.

"Patsy," said Nick, "there is the private entrance to the second floor, between the restaurant and the barroom. See if you cannot slip up those stairs and locate the room Macklyn and Coulter go into."

Patsy was off like a flash. Finding the door open, he slipped up the stairs in advance of Coulter and Macklyn, who, from a door leading from the restaurant, came to the bottom of the stairs just as Patsy was clearing the top step.

In the hallway on the second floor was a table, under which Patsy concealed himself. From this position he saw which room the two men entered and that they left the door wide open.

Such was his position in relation to this door that he could not creep out from under the table without being plainly observed by the two in the room.

But a moment later, Chick, in his capacity as a waiter, followed with some drinks and cigars, which he carried into the room.

As he passed Patsy the latter gave him their signal and whispered:

"When you come out, shut the door."

Having left the drinks and cigars on the table in front

of the two men Chick received the same order from Coulter.

As soon as Chick had closed the door, Patsy bounded out from under the table and, at Chick's suggestion, went into the adjoining room, the door of which Chick had thrown open.

Within that room they found a door communicating with that in which were the two men and, on trying it, Patsy found that it was bolted on the other side.

Under the pretense of entering the room to lay the check for the drinks and cigars on the table and to tell the two within that he would remain in the hall to take their orders when they called, Chick managed to slip the bolt back so that Patsy could open the door.

Slipping out, he told Patsy that he could open the door, and in order to prevent Patsy from being surprised, locked the door of the room in which Patsy was.

Carefully and noiselessly turning the knob, Patsy opened the door the slightest part of an inch, placing the toe of one boot against the bottom of the door. Holding it tightly by the knob, by placing his ear to the crack, Patsy could hear all that went on and all that was said in the room by the two.

"There was no blundering," said Coulter, in reply to something Macklyn had said before Patsy had opened the door. "We found the girl just where you said she would be; we seized her at the very point you told us to seize her. Everything was done according to your directions."

"Then how did it slip up?" asked Macklyn.

"Something occurred," said Coulter, "that neither you nor I counted on and, which nobody would have been likely to have counted on. How the deuce could you and I have supposed that Nick Carter would have taken it into his head to go to a barber-shop right at that time?"

"What has that to do with it?" asked Macklyn.

"It had everything to do with it," said Coulter. "I was on the opposite side of the avenue watching the lads do their work. In another minute they would have had the girl into the coach, when she let out a scream that was heard by Nick Carter and his two men, Chick and Patsy."

"They were passing me at the very moment and they jumped across the street at the same time that a policeman came down from the other corner. When these four men got there, there wasn't anything to do but for our men to make the bolt they did."

"They got away then?" said Macklyn.

"No, they didn't. Nick Carter and his men got the three on the sidewalk and they're in the station-house now. The man on the coach was the only one that got away. And he's nursing a broken head that that young

devil, Patsy, gave him, when they got tangled up among the teams at West End avenue and Eighty-first street."

"Will those three men squeal now that they're arrested?"

"Naw. They can't squeal as to you, for they don't know you are in it. As to me, they know that I'll pull 'em clear to-morrow before the courts."

"Well," said Macklyn, "I waited at the One Hundred and Tenth street entrance until I made up my mind that there had been some slip-up and then I came down to find out what the reason was. I could see nobody and I walked down Seventy-eighth street, opposite Amory's house, to see if anything was going on there. Just after I had passed it, two men came out and I ran across to the museum so that I should not be recognized.

"These two men followed me and I had to make a run for it over into Eighty-first street, but they followed me. However, I got away from them after dodging about the elevated railroad station, by jumping on a trolley car that was going by."

"Nick Carter and one of his men, I'll bet," said Coulter.

"Do you think so?" asked Macklyn.

"I've no doubt of it."

"But they could not have known it was I?"

"Nick Carter's as sharp as a barber's razor."

"Do you mean that he did know me?"

"No, perhaps not, but when he saw you running away, he suspected that you had something to do with it."

"Well, he didn't find out who I was. But it isn't with the past that I want to deal, it's with the next attempt."

"The next attempt? When?"

"To-night."

"The devil."

"The time to do it is to-night. After the failure they won't think that it will be tried again to-night. To-morrow they'll be on their guard and suspicious about anything."

Coulter took his watch from his pocket and, looking at it, said:

"Why, man, it's ten o'clock. How are you going to get the girl out of the house?"

"I'll take care of that. The question is, can you get a reliable gang together for the job."

"Oh, I can get the men for the boddle, if you'll put it up."

"I'll put it up. And here it is."

There was a pause, during which nothing was said, but Patsy could hear the rustling of paper as if money was being counted.

"I'd like to know," said Coulter, "how you expect to get that woman out of the house between now and midnight."

"I'll do it. How long will it take for you to get your men together?"

"Where have I got to place them?"

"Can you have them at Seventh avenue, where the cars cross Central Park, by eleven o'clock?"

"Sooner, if necessary."

"Then have them there at a quarter of eleven."

"To do what?"

Macklyn did not reply at first, but at length said:

"Have no less than three at that point. Have at least

two, at that hour in Seventy-seventh street, ready to execute orders that may be given them. When you have arranged to have those men at these places, come to my room in Seventy-second street, and I will tell you then what plans I've made."

"Then there is no time to lose," replied Coulter, "I'll go off at once about my end and I'll be at your rooms in half an hour."

"And I'll then tell you," said Macklyn, "whether the plans I have already laid can be carried out."

Patsy could then hear the men rise from their seats as if to pass out of the room.

He attempted to close the door and thought he had done so, but, as a matter of precaution, slipped into a far corner of the room, where he hid behind a piece of furniture in the dark, trusting to Chick, whom he knew to be on the watch, to take up the trail.

It was well he did so, for he had not closed the door. The two men in passing out saw that it was open.

"Hell, that door was open," said Coulter.

He threw it wide open, entering the room Patsy was in, saying as he did so:

"I wonder if anybody was in this room."

He looked in, coming a step or two into it, and said:

"No, nobody was in, for it's not lighted up."

He went to the door leading to the hall and tried it, saying:

"It's all right, this door was locked."

They went out into the hall through the door of the room they had occupied to find Chick, still disguised as the waiter, lounging on the table as if waiting their call.

Macklyn threw the supposed waiter a quarter, and said:

"I forgot the check. It's on the table in that room. Get it and bring it down to the barroom to us."

Chick went into the room and saw Patsy at the door:

"Get out of those togs," said Patsy, "as quick as you can, Chick. There's the devil to pay. I must get to the chief."

Chick caught Patsy by the arm and, pulling him out in the hall rapidly, ran him down to a cross hall which ended at a pair of steps, saying:

"You can get to the cross street by that door and there you will find the chief."

Ratsy bounded down the stairs and, passing through the door, saw Nick and Arizona Jake near the corner of the building.

As rapidly as he could tell the story, and tell it clearly, Patsy related what had passed between the two in the room upstairs.

"Then," said Nick, "they're going to make the attempt again to-night?"

"Yes," said Patsy.

"Then we'll take them in the very act," said Nick.

"Patsy, you must follow Coulter to where he is going when he comes out. Get yourself in shape for it now. Arizona Jake and I will take Macklyn in hand. Chick must go to Seventy-seventh street."

Patsy moved off where he could obtain a good view of the entrance.

He had hardly done so when Chick, having discarded his waiter's garb, joined Nick.

"What's up, chief?" asked Chick.

"Patsy hasn't told you? There's to be another attempt to abduct Grace Amory to-night. You must go and see Amory at once."

"I knew something was up," said Chick, "for they ordered me to call two coaches. I called four, for I did not know but what there would be a follow in it."

"Good," cried Nick, "you always do the right thing, Chick."

Nick now told Chick rapidly the scheme that was on foot, and ended by saying:

"At first thought I was for having you go to Mr. Amory and tell him of the plan and ask him to lend himself to it in the assurance that we would be on hand to nip it.

"But, the trouble is, we can't yet tell him just what the scheme is, and I'm afraid that he will shy at it. So say nothing to him about it. But go there as if you were going to ask if all things were right."

At this moment, four coaches drove up with a clatter. Springing forward, Chick sent two of them across the street, calling to Patsy to enter one of them.

Nick and Arizona Jake climbed into the other.

This had hardly been accomplished when Macklyn and Coulter issued from the saloon, closely watched from the two coaches on the other side of the street and by Chick on the sidewalk.

Coulter entered one of the coaches at the restaurant door and got away first. Chick sent the carriage into which Patsy was off after it.

Macklyn took the other coach and that was followed by the one holding Nick and Arizona Jake.

After the carriages had left the block, Chick said to himself aloud:

"It's a deuce of a night off that the chief is getting."

Then he went off to Seventy-seventh street and Columbus avenue.

CHAPTER VI.

PATSY'S CHASE.

The shadow of Patsy was by no means a difficult one. Coulter's coach drove up Eighth avenue until Thirty-first street was reached, when it turned down to Tenth avenue and proceeded up that avenue a few blocks to a store on the corner, which was clearly a liquor place.

His coach drove boldly to the door where Coulter descended, telling the driver to wait for him.

For reasons of his own, Patsy had determined that it was to this very store that Coulter was bound, so he halted his driver at the corner of the street, two blocks below, telling him to await his coming.

Then he crept up so as not to excite attention to himself until he reached the corner of the store where he halted a moment or two uncertain as to what he should do.

From the conversation which had passed between Coulter and Macklyn he was satisfied that Coulter knew him, and that it would not do therefore for him to enter the place in his proper person.

He slipped back into an adjoining doorway and there made such changes in his personal appearance as he thought would prevent himself from being known.

Issuing from there and, appearing on the sidewalk,

he was accosted by a passer-by, who evidently supposed him to be some other person.

"Is it you, Mike?" asked this person. "It's good for sore eyes to see you. It's many a day since you've been around these corners. I heard you was in Boston."

Patsy realized that he must strongly resemble one of this man's friends, so he quickly took up the cue thus given him, and said:

"I'm just back from there and was looking round the old place. I'm glad to see yer, though in the dark I can't quite make yer out."

"Well, that isn't so strange," said the other, "seein' as how we wasn't very thick when yer was livin' here. But I'm Johnny Halloran."

"I recollect yer well," said Patsy, unblushingly. "Let's go and have a drink."

"That suits me," replied the other.

Patsy led him to the place into which Coulter had gone, but, as he attempted to do so, Halloran rather hesitated, and at length said:

"Do you know this place, Mike?"

"No," replied Patsy, "but I've got a good reason for going in there."

"Oh, then it's all right," said Halloran.

"But I was wanting to tell you that it's as tough a place as there is on Tenth avenue, and that's saying a good deal."

"Are you afraid to go into it?" asked Patsy.

"Devil a bit," said Halloran. "The gang as holds out there ain't got anything against me for I don't belong to any of them. I know 'em all and I have the time of day with 'em all, but that's all."

"Come along, then," said Patsy.

They entered the saloon, and going to the bar Patsy cast a rapid glance around the room.

There were a number scattered along the front of the bar, most of whom were intent upon a group of men at the other end, who were throwing dice for drinks and cigars.

About the room were scattered a number of tables at which both men and women, mostly young girls, were sitting.

In a remote corner at a table alone sat Coulter.

A man evidently in authority was directing those sitting at tables in the immediate vicinity of Coulter to move to other tables further away.

Having succeeded in this, he went back to the table where Coulter was and, sitting down, entered into a close conversation with that person.

All this Patsy took in as he and his newly-made friend stood at the upper end of the bar drinking modest glasses of ale.

And from this point Patsy saw the man in authority point to two others who were in the room.

"It isn't often you see that man here," said Halloran.

"Which do you mean?" asked Patsy.

"The one sitting at the table with Larry."

"Who is he?" asked Patsy.

"That's more than I can tell you," replied Halloran.

"He's a big politician as has a big pull with the boys here."

"Who is Larry?"

"He keeps the saloon," said Halloran, "and he's the boss of the gang."

Larry now got up and going to another table, where a group was sitting, spoke to a man who rose and followed him to the table where Coulter was sitting.

To this man Coulter said something which was listened to respectfully. He responded by nods of his head as if consenting to whatever it was that Coulter said.

"Do you know that man's name?" asked Patsy.

"Not his last name," said Halloran, "but he is called Three-Fingered Jack, because he has lost two fingers on his left hand. He's a thief, and they say they were shot off by a policeman who was chasing him."

Shortly after this Three-Fingered Jack left the saloon and Larry brought another man to Coulter to whom Coulter said a few words again, receiving consent, whereupon the man went back to the group with whom he had been sitting.

Again Larry summoned another man, and the same thing passed between him and Coulter as had been done with the others.

"Do you know these men?" asked Patsy.

"I do. One is Jim McDermott, and the other Jack McDermott. They ain't brothers, but they're both thieves and 'Black Cats.'"

"Black Cats?" repeated Patsy. "What do you mean by that?"

"It's easy to see you've been away a long time," said Halloran, with a laugh, "or you'd know that the 'Black Cats' is the name of the worst gang there is on Tenth avenue."

Further explanation came to an end through the return of Three-Fingered Jack with three other men, all of whom, one after the other, were called and had the same brief talk with Coulter.

When this had been done severally, the whole six were called up, surrounding the table, when Patsy thought that he saw Coulter hand a roll of bills to Larry.

He made no mistake, however, in perceiving Coulter hand each one of the six, at least, a bill.

Whereupon all of the six left the saloon.

Coulter rose from his seat and standing a few moments in conversation with Larry, seemed to be preparing to leave.

Patsy quickly tossed a bill across the bar, saying to the friend he had picked up:

"I must get out of this saloon before that man does. Come with me."

They went out together and Patsy hastened down the block to the other corner where he could watch Coulter come from the store.

Shoving a bill into the hands of Halloran he told him to run to the other corner below where he would find a coach, and to tell the driver to come up to that corner quickly.

Halloran, a little bewildered but nevertheless obedient, did as he was told.

Coming back, Patsy said to him:

"Yer don't want to go back in that place again to-night."

"No fear," he said. "I never would have gone in there to-night but for you. It's a bad place entirely, and it's a worse place upstairs. Listen now, and I'll tell yer

something that everybody doesn't know. The way they get in upstairs is through the house next door on the cross street. They've cut a doorway through the two houses. And the place is stuffed with thieves and toughs."

Coulter now came out and entered his coach.

Patsy said to his driver, as he leaped into his coach: "Keep that other coach in sight."

Apparently without suspicion that he had been watched, or, that he was being followed, Coulter went away up Tenth avenue two or three blocks.

They had nearly reached Fifty-fifth street, when Patsy, looking from the window, saw a man running at full speed on the sidewalk. He thought that in him he recognized a man whom he had seen in Larry's saloon.

Putting his head out of the opposite window he called to the driver not to let that running man get ahead of him.

Watching closely until they reached Fifty-fourth street and, satisfied that the man was calling to attract the attention of the driver of Coulter's coach, Patsy dashed out of the coach and to the sidewalk, running fleetly.

He caught up with the man whom he seized without delay or parley, and said:

"What are you up to?"

The man, looking quickly into Patsy's face, suddenly struck out at him, and attempted to utter a cry which was stopped by a violent blow from Patsy, full in his face.

The man went over like a log.

In a moment Patsy had bound and gagged him and finding that he was near a corner grocery, where there was a platform used in business hours for displaying fruit and vegetables, he dragged him across the pavement and thrust him under this platform.

As he came from it, he said:

"I'm afraid my friend Halloran went back to Larry's and told them that I was following Coulter. Well, this fellow can lie there out of harm's way until somebody finds him. In the meantime, I suppose Coulter has got too far ahead for me to catch him."

He ran back to the coach, the driver of which had followed him up pretty closely, not a little astonished at the act of his passenger.

"Driver, I've gagged that man," he said, "because he was following us. Now try to catch that other coach."

By dint of hard driving, the driver of Patsy's coach turned into Seventy-second street at Columbus avenue in time to see the other coach draw up before a house in the center of the block, and Coulter descend from the coach and go into the house.

Patsy halted his coach and, getting out, paid the driver his fare and dismissed him.

As the coach rove away, Patsy said:

"The chief and his new man, Arizona Jake, ought to be around here somewhere. I'll go on the watch for them."

CHAPTER VII.

NICK BECOMES A MAN SERVANT.

Nick, in following Macklyn, had as little difficulty as Patsy had experienced. It was quite clear that Macklyn did not dream that he was under watch.

He drove rapidly over to Fifth avenue and up that street at as fast a pace as the law allowed, until he reached Sixty-third street, where, leaving the coach on the corner, he ran hastily down the block for a short distance, turning up a stoop, where he rang the bell.

Here he conversed for a moment or two at the door, and, turning, ran down the steps and hastened to his carriage, which he again entered.

This time he was driven straightway through Central Park to Seventy-second street, to a house midway in the block, between Columbus avenue and Eighth avenue.

At this point he dismissed the coachman and entered the house.

When the coach had turned into Seventy-second street, Nick, on reaching the corner of Eighth avenue, had halted his coach and, descending from it, had hastily run down the block sufficiently far to make sure which house it was Macklyn had entered, and its number.

Having seen Macklyn inside the house, he returned to his own coach and, having paid and dismissed it, he said to Arizona Jake:

"I have got some inquiries to make. Come along with me."

They walked up Eighth avenue a few doors, when Nick, taking from his pocket a whistle, blew a signal that astonished his companion.

"I say, pardner," exclaimed Arizona Jake, "what are yer callin'—yer dog or yer horse?"

Nick laughed as he replied:

"I don't know yet whether I'm calling anything, but I'd like to catch the policeman on this beat if I can."

The signal he had blown was a roundsman's signal, and, in a moment or two, two officers were on the block, running toward him.

One was the roundsman, who was astonished to hear his own signal given where he alone should sound it.

But, on coming up, he recognized Nick Carter, and said:

"I presume it was you who gave that signal?"

"Yes," said Nick. "I wanted to ask some questions about a house on this block, in Seventy-second street."

Giving the number of the house into which Macklyn had gone, he asked the other policeman if he could tell him who lived there.

"It's a broker," replied the officer, "of the name of Macklyn—Charles Macklyn."

"Does he occupy the whole house?" asked Nick.

"The whole of it, and he's the only man, the only person, in the house, except the servants."

"Tell me all you know about the inside of it."

The roundsman now interfered to ask Nick's purpose in wanting to know.

The question was somewhat embarrassing to Nick, for he did not want to offend the officer, on the one hand, nor did he want to confide to him his reasons for wanting the information, on the other. So he said:

"It isn't a matter of very great importance, after all."

After apparently pausing for a moment or two, he went on, as if in a frank way:

"It is rather one of those things that you want to settle in your own mind as not being possible. I've got a case on hand of a girl who was carried to a house. While she doesn't know where it was, she could tell a

good deal about the interior of it. There is just enough to connect this man Macklyn with it to make it necessary to make sure that it wasn't his house. He is one of, perhaps, a half a dozen of whom the inquiry must be made, on the way to the right one."

"I see," said the roundsman; "it's the clearing away of the brushwood you're after."

"That's it," replied Nick.

"Tell him all you know," said the roundsman, turning to his companion.

The officer made a reply that quite astonished Nick, and was far from what he wanted.

"It wouldn't be surprising if it was," said the officer. "There's many a girl that's run in there, whether they go in because they're willing, or they're pulled in there."

"You surprise me," said Nick. "Have there been complaints about it?"

"No complaints," said the officer, "but lots of grumbling from the neighbors."

"How many servants has he got?"

"Five or six. There's the housekeeper, the cook, the waiter and the chambermaid, but they all go away in the evening, and don't come back until the morning. The only one that stays in the house at night is the man servant, who waits on Macklyn himself."

"I suppose the basement is devoted to the servant?"

"It is, and the first floor has the parlor, the library and the dining-room. Mr. Macklyn uses the whole second floor for himself, and what there is on the two floors above is only bedrooms."

"You seem to be well acquainted with the interior," said Nick.

"I am; my cousin used to be housekeeper before this one. And that's why I've heard so much of what's going on in there. It was so bad that my cousin wouldn't stay there, although she was never in the house until after breakfast, and went away right after dinner."

"Then, if Mr. Macklyn has visitors in the evening, the door is waited on by his body-servant?" asked Nick.

"That's the one," replied the officer. "And he has a busy time of it, for there are lots that come there."

"Well," said Nick, "I take it from what you say that I needn't look any further as to him. You say the library is on the first floor?"

"It is," replied the officer, "between the parlor and the dining-room."

"Then that lets Mr. Macklyn out of the case, for the girl I have in mind says that the library of the house she was in was in the rear, on the second floor."

"No," said the officer, "that's not Macklyn's house, then. Macklyn's bedroom is in the rear, on the second floor, and the front room of that floor is the place where he loafes and smokes when he's home and alone."

"Well, then," said Nick, "I've learned all I want to know about Macklyn's house. It was a lucky thought when I blew that whistle to catch you. I thank you both."

"We're always ready to do you any service we can, Mr. Carter," said the roundsman.

"I know that," said Nick, "and I'll bid you good-night."

Calling Arizona Jake, who had been a puzzled listener to this conversation, he turned on his heel and walked

down Eighth avenue, while the two policemen turned in the opposite direction.

"I say, pardner," said Arizona Jake, "I'm blashed if I know what ye're driving at. What kind of a story is that ye're shovin' up against those two fellows?"

Nick laughed as he said:

"Jake, you know a good deal about cattle, guns, horses and cards, but I don't think you know yet the ways of a New York detective."

"I don't," said Arizona Jake, "and I'm darned if I will learn, if I can't see furder than I've seen into this."

"Well, Jake," said Nick, "you and I are going into that house. Before I went in I wanted to know what it was like. I knew that the officer on the beat could tell me. And I wanted him to tell me without his knowing why I wanted to know, or what I was going into the house for, so I put up that little story."

There seemed to be something particularly funny in this to Arizona Jake, for he backed up against a lamp-post and laughed long and heartily.

Nick waited until he had had his laugh out, and then said:

"Now come the other way, and we'll see if the policemen have got out of sight."

They retraced their steps, and, again reaching the corner of Seventy-second street, satisfied themselves that the policemen had disappeared up Eighth avenue.

"Come," said Nick.

They hurried up Seventy-second street and, reaching Macklyn's house, ran up the steps and rang the bell.

The man servant of whom the officer had spoken responded, throwing open the door, as if the call were expected. He started somewhat on seeing two persons, and made a motion as if he would obstruct their entrance, but Nick, closely followed by Arizona Jake, pushed forward into the hall, and Arizona Jake closed the door after him.

"Where is Mr. Macklyn?" asked Nick.

"I will tell him you are here," said the servant. "What names?"

"I didn't ask you to tell him that we were here," said Nick. "I asked where he was."

"He is in his room," replied the man.

"Back room, second floor?"

"Yes, sir."

Suddenly Nick leaped upon the man servant, clutching him by the throat, and, pushing him before him, he said to Arizona Jake:

"Follow close."

Thus he pushed the man along the hall and into the dining-room in the rear.

When within the dining-room he said to Arizona Jake:

"Close all the doors."

Arizona Jake obeyed, but asking:

"I say, pardner, what's this? A hold-up?"

"Yes, a hold-up, but not the kind you mean," replied Nick. "Turn up the lights."

Turning to the frightened man servant, whom he yet held by the throat, Nick said:

"If I let you loose, will you yell, or will you be quiet?"

The man intimated that he would be quiet, and Nick relaxed his hold, leading the man to a point where the

light shone strongly on his face. Sternly and curiously he examined the man's face and features.

When he had satisfied himself as to the man's appearance, he said to Arizona Jake:

"Take out your gun, Jake, and if the man so much as peeps, blow the top of his head off."

"Business begins," said Jake, as he drew his revolver, and he added: "Now, you galoot, if ye so much as waggle a finger I'll put a ball in yer."

From his pocket Nick brought out some paints and brushes, and rapidly began to paint his face and make lines thereon, looking alternately at the man servant and the mirror on the wall.

Arizona Jake looked on these proceedings of Nick Carter with quite as much astonishment as did the man servant, so bewildered by fright that he could not think.

When this was done to Nick's satisfaction, he drew from his pocket several wigs, which he compared with the color of the man servant's hair, and, selecting one, began to brush and trim it into a likeness of the manner in which the man servant wore his hair.

"Look here, pardner," said Arizona Jake, "are yer goin' to play in a theayter?"

"Not in a theatre," replied Nick, "but I'm going to act a little drama for the benefit of Mr. Macklyn in his own house."

"I'm learning something every minute," said Arizona Jake, with a grin.

Having arranged the wig as he wanted it, and having put it on his head, Nick compared his reflection in the glass with the poor man servant, who was trembling like a leaf, not daring to stir.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" exclaimed Arizona Jake. "Ye look more like the galoot than the galoot looks like himself."

He laughed so heartily that Nick was compelled to bid him to be more quiet. Then he said to the man servant:

"Take off your coat."

The man obeyed. Nick instructed him to take off his collar and cravat. This done, Nick donned the articles, and, indeed, when this was accomplished, it would have required very close inspection to determine that the man so changed was not, indeed, the trembling servant.

"Now," said Nick, but he got no further, for a bell sounded in a far part of the house, to which the man servant made an immediate motion, as if to respond.

"As yer are!" exclaimed Arizona Jake, presenting his revolver. "Hands up!"

"What was that bell?" asked Nick.

But the man was so frightened that he could not find voice to reply.

"Was it the call of Mr. Macklyn for you?"

The man nodded his head, still unable to find his tongue.

"Where did he ring it?" asked Nick.

The man at last found his voice, and answered:

"In the front room on the floor above."

The bell rang a second time, and most impatiently.

"I'll answer it," replied Nick.

To Arizona Jake he said:

"You hold this man here. Don't let him make a sound."

"If he does," replied Arizona Jake, "he'll never make another, for it'll be lost in the sound this gun will make."

"And," said Nick, "if any one comes into this room, you keep him here."

"They'll stay here, you bet," replied Arizona Jake.

Nick left the room and in a moment or two returned, asking the man servant where the bottled whisky was.

The man servant pointed to a buffet, at the same moment taking a bunch of keys from his pocket. Nick hastily caught the keys from his hands and, unlocking the doors of the lower part, took out two bottles of whisky.

He also caught from the buffet a tray, on which he placed some glasses and the two bottles.

"I say, waitah," exclaimed Arizona Jake, with a broad grin, "demme, yer know, I'll take some of that bug-juice myself."

Nick laughed, but did not respond as he drew the corks from the bottles.

Arizona Jake, however, rising from his chair, said to the man servant:

"Mosey, you galoot, and trot me out a bottle and some glasses."

The man servant promptly obeyed, and, setting a bottle on the table, produced some glasses. He took up the corkscrew Nick had laid down, and Arizona Jake called out:

"As yere were! Hands up!"

The man servant obeyed, with frightened rapidity.

"I can draw that cork with this gun," said Jake.

"For heaven's sake!" said Nick, "don't fire that gun now. Let the man draw the cork."

"I sabe," good-naturedly replied Arizona Jake. "John William Jeemes, draw the cork."

The man servant obeyed, and Jake, leveling his revolver, said again:

"As yer are! Back two paces! Hands up!"

With willing obedience, the man servant assumed the position.

Arizona Jake advanced to the table to help himself to a drink from the bottle.

Restraining his laughter, Nick took up the tray containing the bottles and glasses and went out of the room. He was back again in a moment or two, asking the man servant where the Reina Victorias were kept.

The man servant, with a frightened look at Arizona Jake, hastily lowered one arm to point to the same closet whence the whisky had been taken, and as quickly threw his arm up again.

From the closet Nick took a box partially filled with cigars, and, taking two or three out, he threw them on the table, saying to Arizona Jake:

"Smoke with Mr. Macklyn, Jake."

"Right yer are," replied Jake.

Nick went out of the room with these cigars, and had hardly time to reach the room above when the doorbell rang.

The man servant again made a motion as if to go to the door, but Arizona Jake again leveled his revolver and commanded:

"As yer are! Stand fast! Hands up!"

In a moment Nick entered the room, hastily saying to the man servant:

"Do you know who that is at the door?"

"The man Mr. Macklyn is expecting," replied the man.

"Do you know his name?"

"I was told before I let him in to ask if his name was Coulter."

Nick dashed out of the room, and, going to the door, threw it open.

"Is Mr. Macklyn in?" asked a voice.

"What name, please?"

"I have an appointment with Mr. Macklyn."

"Is the name Coulter?"

"It is, but Macklyn's a fool for giving it."

"Mr. Macklyn will see you in his room," said Nick, in his character as the man servant.

He led the way upstairs and ushered Coulter into the front room on the second floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND ATTEMPT.

On Coulter's entrance, after greeting him, Macklyn said to his supposed servant:

"Go out. Close the door after you, and go downstairs."

Nick went out and closed the door after him, but he did not go downstairs.

On the contrary he slipped into the back room from the hall, and from thence, into a narrow passageway which led from the back room to the front room. Reaching the door which opened into that front room, he deftly and skillfully opened it far enough to be able to see that the two men, as a beginning of their business, were taking a drink, standing at the table with their backs to him.

Boldly Nick swung open the door and stepped in. He closed the door after him noiselessly.

Near the door and, across the corner, was a large, high-backed, old-fashioned sofa.

Over this Nick climbed as light as a cat, dropping down behind it, thus completely concealing himself.

"I don't know whether this is wise," he said to himself, "for I may not be able to get out if I'm called. But I'll know what goes on in this room."

Macklyn took up the business at once.

"Have you got your men, Coulter?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Coulter, "they are waiting at the proper places for the instructions."

"There is no time to be lost," replied Macklyn. "I'll tell you my plan.

"Miss Ransom is a very intimate friend of Miss Amory. She is lying very ill at her house in Sixty-third street on the east side of the Park. I have already been there this evening to learn that her condition is worse, and that she is calling for Grace Amory.

"I secured some of the paper used by the Ransoms, with their coat-of-arms on it, some days ago. I have written a letter to Miss Amory in the name of Mr. Ransom, asking her to come to his daughter at once.

"I will now send it by messenger to Amory's house, and I know that Grace will respond at once. And I know, too, that she is expecting a call of that kind. And I further know that Mr. Amory will call for his carriage, for the coachman is held for orders of the kind, and that he will accompany his daughter to the Ransom house.

"Now, they will cross the Park, taking the Eighty-fifth

street entrance to the Park, and so over to Sixty-third street.

"After they have entered the Park they can be stopped, the driver of the coach pulled from the box, old Amory taken out and gagged, and the coach, with Grace in it, driven to the One Hundred and Tenth street entrance, where I'll have a carriage in waiting."

"It will never do, that plan," said Coulter.

"Why not?"

"Because Amory will not, for he cannot, drive through the Park at that hour of the night."

"Oh, yes, he can," replied Macklyn, "for he's done it for a year on the average of once a week. He will not enter more than a few feet into the park, and I've already arranged to have the officers on watch elsewhere."

"Well, then," said Coulter, "you will take all the responsibility of failure of the plan."

"Yes," said Macklyn, "of the plan. Station your men within the park and the rest will go."

"Macklyn," said Coulter, "the whole success of your plan depends upon Amory's attempt to cross the park at Eighty-fifth street. If they should take it into their heads to go down by the way of Fifty-ninth street and around the park, then you'd be up a stump."

"Yes, but he won't."

"We ought to make sure that he does go by the Eighty-fifth street route. His coachman, I learned to-night, is an old Tenth avenue lad. Our boys know him."

"And what then?"

"Why then we can use it to make sure that he does go by that way."

"How?"

"That I've got to determine."

With this Coulter rose from his chair, saying:

"We have no time to lose. You must get off your letter or it will be too late and I must see my men and place them."

"I will send for a messenger at once."

Macklyn crossed the room, but he was detained by Coulter, who said:

"Why, man, you're not going to send your messenger from this house, are you? It's leaving a great trace behind you."

"That's so," said Macklyn, "I'll take the letter out and send it from outside. Take another drink and we'll go out together."

The two went to the table together, standing at it, as they had done before and Nick, believing that the conference was at an end, took the chances of leaping from his place of concealment and making his escape.

In an instant he had climbed over the back of the sofa, dropping lightly to the floor, and, opening the door, without being seen, slipped through, closing it after him. Running through the narrow passageway to the other room, he escaped into the hall and rapidly tripped down the stairs.

He had barely reached the lower floor when the bell from Macklyn's room sounded again.

Waiting a moment or two, so that his response to it might not be too prompt, he reascended the stairs. But almost immediately, Macklyn and Coulter appeared at the head of the stairs.

"James, I am going out for a few moments," said Macklyn.

"Yes, sir," replied Nick, as he backed down the stairs and went to the front door to open it.

As the two passed through the door, Macklyn said:

"I may be gone longer than half an hour, but wait up for me until I come back."

"Yes, sir," said Nick, respectfully, closing the door on them.

He shot the bolt in the door.

Dashing back into the dining-room, he found the man servant ready to drop with fatigue from being compelled to hold up his arms, while Arizona Jake had very nearly emptied the contents of the whisky bottle, and was smoking his last cigar.

"I say, pardner," exclaimed Arizona Jake, "this is a great game. I'm in the business for life."

Nick made no reply to this, but began taking off his coat and cravat and wig. Then he bade the man servant to bring him some soap and water.

"Follow him, Jake," said Nick, "and don't let him bolt."

"He won't bolt my track," said Arizona Jake, as he followed him out of the room.

They were back again in an instant, and Nick removed the traces of the make-up from his face and donned his own coat.

"What's the next game?" asked Jake.

"Lots of work," said Nick, "I can't tell you of it here. First we've got to attend to this fellow. I don't want to make him uncomfortable, but we've got to prevent him from interfering."

Pushing the man into an easy chair, Nick quickly bound him to it and, placing a gag in his mouth, left him secure from interfering with his plans.

Then he took Arizona Jake into the street.

Rapidly telling his Western friend what had occurred while he had been absent and what he had learned, he was amused to see the fever of indignation into which Arizona Jake worked himself over this second attempt to capture Miss Amory.

"Now, Jake," said Nick, "it isn't enough to prevent them from doing this. I could do that by going down to the Amory house and blowing the whole thing. But I want to capture——"

"The whole outfit," broke in Arizona Jake.

"That's what I want," said Nick.

"I'm with ye, collar and elbow," said Jake.

"Then the first thing for us is to get to the Eighty-sixth street entrance of the park before Coulter gets there with his men. Are you good for a run?"

"I can outrun any galoot in the settlement," replied Arizona Jake.

"Then come on," said Nick, dashing away at full speed.

Notwithstanding his boast, Arizona Jake saw Nick slip away from him as if he were standing still, and he was compelled to call on Nick to ease up.

"I thought you said you could outrun any galoot in the settlement," said Nick, as he slackened up, laughing a bit.

"You ain't a galoot," said Arizona Jake, "you're a jack rabbit; I never try to outrun them."

At the speed they did make, it did not take the two men long to reach the point where they meant to hide themselves and observe.

Concealing themselves behind some shrubbery they

were not compelled to wait long before they heard approaching footsteps, which Nick determined to be Coulter's gang.

"Here they come," he said to Arizona Jake.

"Not a move now, but keep your eyes wide open and your finger on your trigger."

He had hardly uttered these words when some one, joining them with a leap, crouched down beside them.

Arizona Jake's revolver was up in an instant, and it might have been bad for the newcomer had not Nick quickly seized his arm and bade him be still.

The newcomer was Patsy.

"I saw you make the dash," said Patsy, "and I came after you. There are four men who are making for this entrance."

"The men we are here to watch," said Nick, in a low tone. "They're going to try to stop the Amory coach somewhere near here and take Grace Amory again. I'm glad you have come. We'll have to face three, if not four."

"I'm blowed if it ain't the youngster," said Arizona Jake, who had been listening intently to this exchange, and had only now recognized Patsy.

Further talk, however, ended, for four men showed up on the roadway.

One man, who seemed to be the leader, halted them, while he carefully observed the surroundings.

Then motioning them to follow him, he walked on until they were nearly lost to sight in a turn of the roadway.

"Follow," whispered Nick, "and as quietly as possible."

Stealing along behind the bushes and taking advantage of everything that would keep them out of sight, they stole along until they reached a point where they could see the four men standing on the roadway at a point where was another sharp turn.

Here the man who seemed to be the leader sent one man into the bushes on one side and two on the other, but not until he had given them earnest instructions, unheard by the three watching men.

Having disposed of the men, he hurriedly retraced his steps, leaving the park.

"We cannot find a better place than this," said Nick, "to watch what will happen."

After a moment he said:

"The moment the coach enters, we must be ready to spring out after it and follow up sharply to the point where it will be stopped."

He was silent again a moment, and then said:

"I'll bet that Chick comes with the coach somewhere."

"And we'll have another gun," said Arizona Jake.

"And a gun that don't miss fire," said Patsy.

Then they settled themselves to watch and wait.

CHAPTER IX.

CHICK HAS A SURPRISE.

While the three were waiting developments, something was proceeding in Seventy-seventh street which puzzled Chick not a little.

He had gone to Mr. Amory as Nick had instructed, and rather alarmed the old gentleman in the very fact of his coming.

Chick had some difficulty in allaying the fears of Mr. Amory.

He told him that he had been instructed by Mr. Carter to come to Mr. Amory and ask if everything was all right; that it was only the caution of a very cautious man, and had no significance whatever.

Mr. Amory had said that nothing of any description had occurred out of the usual since Nick and Chick had left him earlier in the evening.

He further said that Miss Amory had not retired because she feared that she might be summoned to the bedside of a very dear friend who was lying at the point of death, and, that he, Mr. Amory, was in momentary expectations of a summons; that he had held his coachman at the house so that, if summoned, Miss Amory could be driven to the house in her own coach, and that he, Amory, would accompany her.

Chick prolonged his stay as long as he could, and being forced finally to leave from having no reason to offer that was reasonable, went into the street, where he concealed himself in an adjoining yard, under the cover of some barrels left there by workmen in the adjoining house.

Finally becoming satisfied that the house in the yard of which he was hiding was undergoing extensive repairs and, therefore, was unoccupied, he made an effort to get inside it.

To his great satisfaction, on trying the basement door, he found that the workmen had neglected to lock it, and so he passed through into the lower hall and up the stairs into the front parlor, from the windows of which he had a clear view of all the approaches to the Amory residence.

He had watched more than an hour, when he saw a messenger boy approach the house and ring the bell of the Amory door.

"The summons to the sick friend has come," he said to himself.

A moment or two later he saw a man leave the Amory house and hurry away.

"The coachman, I suppose," commented Chick.

It was not long before the coachman drove up before the door.

It was not until then that Chick saw on the opposite side of the street, two men, who, in the way they walked and moved along, seemed to be avoiding observation. They went down the street some distance, crossed, and came up on the side on which was the Amory house.

Closely watching them, Chick saw them stop when opposite the driver and greet the driver as an old acquaintance. And the coachman seemed to respond to their greetings as if he knew them.

There was a little conversation between them, when one of the men on the sidewalk took from his pocket a flask and offered it to the man on the box.

There was apparent reluctance upon the part of the coachman to take it, but the other continued to urge it, and then Chick saw the coachman descend from the box. Going to the side of the horses furthest from Chick, he pretended to be busy with settling the harness, while, as a matter of fact, he was drinking from the flask which had been brought to him by the man who was offering it.

Suspicious, but not knowing quite why, Chick watched closely, and in a moment saw the whole of the scheme.

In an instant almost, the coachman fell like a log in the street.

The two men springing on him, rapidly took his coat

off, which was donned by one of them and, as well, his hat.

"He's been doped," exclaimed Chick. "It's part of the game."

Still watching, Chick saw the men drag the insensible coachman to the rear of the carriage, and saw them push him under it.

The one who had put on his hat and coat climbed to the box and assumed the proper position of a coachman, with the butt of his whip resting upon his right knee.

The other man immediately made his escape across the street, where he was joined by a third, who had sprung from a point Chick could not locate, and the two made off across the Museum grounds in the direction of Eighty-first street and Eighth avenue.

Chick thought rapidly.

His first impulse was to rush out and seize the man who had substituted himself for the coachman.

His second, to rush into the Amory house and give an alarm.

But he thought that by doing so he would probably interfere with a well-laid plan of his chief, Nick Carter, who had apparently had knowledge of what was going on, and he, himself, knew that the attempt to seize Miss Amory was to be made.

He concluded, therefore, that he would not attempt to interfere with the plans that had been made by the abductors or, perhaps, with those laid by Nick. But he did not feel as if he could take the chances of letting it go wholly.

He determined his own course. Slipping downstairs, he came out into the street and stood at the foot of the steps a moment or two, and then said to the man on the box:

"I want to run up to the avenue and get my flask filled before it's too late. Will you watch the door till I come back?"

"Yes," said the man on the box, "if I don't have to drive away before you get back."

"I won't be gone five minutes," said Chick, "for I'll run both ways."

"I'll watch as long as I can," said the man on the box.

Chick started on a run, but the run was a very short one, for when he thought he had deceived the coachman he turned short, and coming down the gutter got on the outside of the coach, opened the door noiselessly, and springing in, landed on the soft cushions as light as a thistle-down.

He had only just closed the door of the coach when the door of the Amory residence opened and Miss Amory tripped down the steps, stopping as she opened the door of the coach to say to the driver:

"To the Ransoms."

She stepped into the coach as Mr. Amory appeared on the top step.

Chick, leaning forward, placed his handkerchief gently across her mouth, saying:

"Pardon, Miss Amory, I am Chick. Don't make an alarm. There is something wrong here."

By this time Mr. Amory was stepping into the coach.

"Make no noise, Mr. Amory. I am Chick. Guarding you."

Mr. Amory had halted a moment on the step, and

Chick, drawing him in, closed the door after him, as he said:

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Amory, be quiet. You know me."

"I know you, Mr. Chick, to be sure," said Mr. Amory; "but what is the meaning of all this?"

Before Chick could reply Mr. Amory thrust his head out of the window, calling to the driver not to stir.

He then turned to Chick and again demanded an explanation.

"Then I have got to tell you, Mr. Amory," replied the quick-witted Chick. "I have been put on to watch and guard you by Mr. Carter. I am trying to do so now, and I propose to go with you to the house you're going to and come back with you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Amory, "that is all right, only why could you not have told us so when you were in the house?"

"I did not know then that you were going out, and when I did know I had not the chance of doing so without making an alarm, and so I crept into the coach."

"Very well," said Mr. Amory, now reassured. "Mr. Carter is very thoughtful."

He thrust his head out of the window again and told the coachman to drive on.

The coach rattled down Seventy-seventh street to Eighth avenue, and thus up to Eighty-fifth street.

As they approached the entrance the driver began some loud talking to his horses, amid which he managed to introduce a whistle, which Chick immediately took to be a signal.

At once he was on the alert, anxiously peering out of one window and the other for the first sign of an attack.

Unobserved by either Mr. Amory or his daughter, he succeeded in getting a revolver in each hand, and sat waiting for the outcome.

The carriage made a rapid dash into the park, and it had passed but a short distance when on a sharp turn to the right he saw three figures stand out from behind a clump of shrubbery.

It was a welcome sight.

In the three figures he had recognized Nick, Patsy and the Westerner, in his broad-brimmed hat.

Chick could not restrain a gleeful laugh.

"You seem to be amused, Mr. Chick," said Mr. Amory.

"I am," responded Chick, as he saw the three figures jump in after the coach.

But a few steps further were taken by the horses when they were suddenly reined up on command of a loud voice, saying:

"Halt!"

The attack had been made.

CHAPTER X.

THE ATTACK.

The moment the coach had appeared opposite them Nick, leading, closely followed by Patsy and Arizona Jake, had flung themselves directly behind the coach.

Running with all their speed after the coach, they were, therefore, at the point of attack as quickly as the carriage.

But the tactics employed were somewhat different than had been anticipated by Nick.

The famous detective knew the plan as it had been arranged by Macklyn, and by him given to Coulter.

But he did not know the variations Coulter had introduced after leaving Macklyn.

This variation was what had been witnessed by Chick, to wit: The drugging of Mr. Amory's coachman.

The successful doing of this had altered the plans within the park.

As was subsequently told, the one who had assisted in the drugging of the coachman, seeing his companion in possession of the coach, had run away to meet Coulter to announce the success of their scheme.

Then the two had hastened to the park, and, approaching from the other side, had told the men that the coach would be driven into the park by one of their own gang.

Coulter had retired to a safe distance, while the man he had brought there remained.

This brought about a change in the tactics.

The attacking party only sought to get Mr. Amory out of the coach and detain him, and while preventing him from making an outcry the man on the box would drive away with Grace Amory to One Hundred and Tenth street, where she would be met by the party provided by Macklyn, who would take her in charge.

Consequently, the four men paid no attention to the horses, but, two on each side, sprang to the doors of the coach.

Nick had arranged that Arizona Jake should immediately on the stopping of the coach spring to the heads of the team and engage the man to be found there.

He and Patsy were each to take a side of the coach and engage the men there, receiving Chick's help if Chick were about, as Nick confidently expected he would be.

On the side of the attacking party there was a surprise for them in store, in the fact of the coach having more than two inmates, for the driver had no idea that there was any one else in the coach than Mr. Amory and his daughter.

This, then, was the situation at the moment of the attack.

Two men sprang out of the bushes on the call of one of them, which served not only as a signal for the attack, but for the driver to pull in his horses.

On Nick's order of "sail in!" Arizona Jake sprang to the head of the team with a whoop and cry:

"Sail in it is!"

In doing so he had passed two of those who had approached the side of the coach on which Miss Amory was seated.

Nick had followed him, and at once attacked the two.

On the other side, Patsy had come forward to face two, where he did not expect to find more than one.

By the time he reached the side of the coach one of the ruffians had thrown open the door and reached in to seize Mr. Amory, when he received a stinging blow in the face and leaped back with an oath to see a man follow him out, who immediately set at him in a vicious assault.

It was Chick, who, after hitting the man, had leaped out of the coach.

Unfortunately, the man in jumping backward to escape Chick's ferocious assault had done that which he could

not have done had he been facing Patsy. He nearly upset Patsy.

This brief delay and confusion enabled the other man to seize Mr. Amory and pull him from the coach, the signal for the coachman, leaning from his box to see, to whip up and rush off.

Patsy had regained his footing instantly, however, and had sprung at the man just as he had dragged Mr. Amory from the coach.

The man defended himself, and with no little skill, the result being that two personal combats were raging on that side of the coach most viciously, while Mr. Amory was too bewildered to do anything.

He had, indeed, been partly stunned by being thrown violently to the ground.

On the other side of the coach the contest was unequal, for two active men, who were clearly acquainted with the art of using their fists, had set upon Nick when he attacked them.

But they were busy in defending themselves from the vicious onslaught Nick made on them.

Arizona Jake, reaching the head of the horses and finding no one there to fight, was for coming back to the assistance of Nick.

But as busily as Nick was, he had, nevertheless, kept an eye out as to what was going on about him, and had quickly realized that the man on the box was one of the gang.

He saw the man lift his whip to send the horses into speed, and he called out to Jake:

"Don't lose those horses!"

At the same moment Chick, fighting his man with both fists, yelled out:

"Nick, the man on the box is one of the gang!"

"Jake, seize those horses," cried Nick, still fighting his two men.

By this time, however, the spirited horses, lashed by the driver, had sprang forward several paced, and, although Arizona Jake had a strong hold on the reins of one, they were plunging forward in a frightful manner, pulling Arizona Jake with them.

Out on the night air rang Arizona Jake's characteristic whoop as he yelled back:

"I've got them hosses, and they don't get away from Arizona Jake!"

The horses were plunging away from the scene, taking Jake with them, in tremendous leaps, when suddenly up in the air shot Arizona Jake, landing on the back of one of them.

Reaching over, he grasped the reins of the other horse, and gathering the two reins in his left hand, he yelled back to the driver, who was thrashing his horses furiously:

"I'm drivin' this pair. Lay down that whip!"

"Get off that horse or I'll break your neck," said the man on the box.

"Get off that box or I'll put a hole into yer!"

Between the shouts, the lashings they were receiving and the man on the back of one of them, to which the horses were unaccustomed, they had become wild and excited, and were now plunging along in frightful bounds.

"Get off that box, ye black-muzzled coyote!" called Arizona Jake.

The man responded by another cut of the whip.

Taking a firm hold of the reins in his left hand, Arizona Jake drew a revolver, and shooting over his left shoulder backward, let fly a ball which struck the driver's hat from his head.

Another ball that followed immediately went wide of the mark, and Arizona Jake, with a smothered oath, throwing himself fairly across the backs of the two horses, turned himself over on his left side so as to give his right arm free motion.

This time when the ball sped from his gun it struck the driver full in the shoulder, and he toppled from his box to the ground in a helpless heap.

"Whoop!" yelled Arizona Jake. "I fixed the galoot that time."

He righted himself on the horses and gave another whoop that could have been heard across the park.

This whoop, together with the pistol shot, had been heard by Nick, and, busy as he was with the two men now making a fierce fight on him, he recognized its importance.

He knew that it was a yell of triumph, and that it meant that in whatever he attempted Arizona Jake had succeeded.

All this time the men fighting Chick and Patsy had been giving them each a fight such as they did not usually encounter.

They could not, therefore, give any assistance to their chief, who was battling against two, both of whom were determined to get the best of, if not kill, the famous detective, whom they had recognized.

Arizona Jake, on finding that he no longer had the driver to contend against, devoted himself to the control of the mad animals, one of which he was riding.

Nick, on hearing Arizona Jake's whoop, had given an answering one, and it served to inform Jake where the party he had left was.

It seemed to him that they were just across an open space which seemed to be free of obstruction. It was. It was one of the lawns which were so carefully tended, and which are guarded by signs of "Keep off the grass."

It is not likely that Arizona Jake would have any particular respect for the signs if he had seen them, but as a matter of fact, he did not. But he did see a short cut to the spot where he had left his friends engaging in a fierce game of fisticuffs.

Getting the horses ~~under~~ some control, he deliberately pulled them out of the roadway and on to the greensward, and sending them across it at a great pace he mounted the little incline which led to the spot where the men were yet fighting. The horses dashed through the shrubbery and landed the carriage on the roadway just behind the fighting men.

It was a feat of horsemanship that few would attempt in the park, and that none but a Western horseman would have undertaken.

He arrived with a whoop and in time to see one of the men who had been battling with Nick, his face running with blood, back out from the contest, and taking his gun from his pocket make deliberate aim at Nick.

He never pulled the trigger, for quick as a flash Ari-

zona Jake had pulled, and the ball took effect in the revolver arm of the villain, his gun dropping to the ground.

Relieved of one assailant, Nick made short work of the other, sending him insensible to the ground with a good square blow on the chin—a complete knockout.

Sitting on his horse, having the plunging animal in absolute control, Arizona Jake celebrated Nick's victory with another whoop.

Turning his head, he saw Patsy engaged with his man, and he gave another whoop, as he cried out:

"See the youngster fight! But isn't he a terror!"

An instant later, leveling his revolver, he shouted to Patsy:

"Stand back, youngster, and let me perforate him!"

"As you were, Jake!" called out Patsy, with a laugh. "You can't shoot straight enough, and you'll be hitting me."

The effect of this little diversion was, after all, to give an advantage to Patsy.

The one with whom he was battling, perhaps a little alarmed by Arizona Jake's proposing to shoot him, for a brief instant left his guard open.

Patsy's fists went straight for his chin, knocking him completely out.

Arizona Jake celebrated Patsy's victory by another whoop, and was called upon immediately after to give another one in celebration of Chick's victory over his man.

By this time the police, who had been attracted principally by Arizona Jake's shooting, arrived on the scene, and for the first time an opportunity was given to look into the interior of the coach to Miss Amory.

She was there, but in a dead faint.

Leaping from the horses and commanding one of the mounted policemen to hold them, Arizona Jake opened the coach door.

He lifted Miss Amory out as if she were a child, and, carrying her to the side bank, supported her head while from a flask he carried in his pocket he let a few drops of whisky drop between her lips, fanning her in the meantime with his broad sombrero.

Miss Amory quickly regained consciousness, and, looking up, was rather startled at the rough face, kindly as his expression was in looking down on her, and rather started up in alarm.

"Easy now, lady," said Arizona Jake. "I'm a friend, and yer ain't got any better than I'd be. I wouldn't harm a hair of that purty head of yours if they were to slice me into bits for it."

Her father now came up, and taking her hand asked if she was harmed.

"No," said Arizona Jake, much in the tone that a man speaks to a child when sympathizing with it, "she ain't hurt a mite, only her little heart is scart out of her body."

"Grace," said her father, "you owe your life, or better, your liberty, to the gallantry of this gentleman."

Rapidly he told his daughter of the attempt made to run off with her, and how Arizona Jake had rescued her and brought her back.

Grace turned a glowing face to the wild Westerner. Putting out her little white hand she placed it in his

great broad, brown one, where it lay like a drop of snow in a large brown leaf, as she said:

"I can't find the proper words to thank you. But I do thank you."

Arizona Jake swept off his broad brimmed hat, standing a little embarrassed before her grateful eyes, and said:

"Ye're a straight flush, ace high, that calls my four kings every time."

Perhaps Grace did not understand his words, but she made no mistake as to his tones.

In the meantime, while this was going on at one side, Nick had been explaining what had occurred, to the sergeant of police, who had come up, also attracted by the sound of shooting in the park.

Nick, having finished his tale, now turned over the prisoners to the police, asking that they be locked up, as he had other things to do in the case and other prisoners to arrest.

But, on looking round, to their intense astonishment they found that the one whom Nick had put to sleep had managed to escape and had got clear away.

The men whom Chick and Patsy had overcome, however, were there, as well as the two men who had been wounded.

As the policemen present took charge of the prisoners, thus relieving "Nick Carter's outfit," as Arizona Jake called it, from their care, Patsy crossed over to Arizona Jake to congratulate him upon his good work of the night.

But Arizona Jake, seeing him approach, rushed at him and throwing his arms about him, began to dance with him about the roadway, shouting:

"You're ace high, you little terror. I'm goin' to take you down to Red Gulch. I'll make a bad man of you, for sure."

The scene was so ludicrous that, nervous and agitated almost on the verge of a collapse as she was, Grace Amory was compelled to laugh and all the more when Arizona Jake, seeing Chick approach, dropped Patsy so hastily, in order to grasp Chick's hands, that Patsy found himself sitting on the ground.

Nor was Arizona Jake's greeting of Chick any the less hearty, for he pronounced him "the gamest man, in Nick Carter's game outfit."

"I say, pardners," he said, "I haven't had so much fun since I left the diggings of Red Gulch. I tell ye, this is a lively settlement and keeps the boys on the hustle."

"I reckon," said Patsy, mimicking him a little, "Arizona Jake, that if I know the chief, the fun isn't all over yet for this night."

"No," said Chick, "the chief says he's got more work to do and I take it it'll be pretty hot before we get through."

"Hotter than this?" asked Arizona Jake.

"Oh, this isn't a marker to what it will be," cried Patsy.

"Whoop, let 'er flicker," yelled Arizona Jake, jumping up into the air and clapping his heels together, "this is the fastest outfit I ever bunched chips with, but ye can't strike too fast a clip for me."

By this time Nick had arranged matters with the police force and he came up, saying to Mr. Amory:

"You and your daughter should enter your coach and

go home. You need not fear another attack. Before daylight, I hope to have everybody who is a party to this attempted abduction under arrest."

"But," said Mr. Amory. "I have nobody to drive me home. I do not know what has become of my coachman."

"When we left your house," said Chick, your coachman was lying in the gutter, drugged."

"Drugged?" repeated Mr. Amory.

Chick told him at length what he had seen before they started from Seventy-seventh street.

"In Heaven's name," said Mr. Amory, "why did you not tell me this before we started?"

"I was afraid I should interfere with the chief's plans to capture the gang at their work."

Mr. Amory, a little inclined to be peppery, worked himself up to quite an indignant state, and asked:

"Then you deliberately endangered the lives of my daughter and myself?"

"Your lives were never in danger," said Nick, coldly. "Chick did exactly what was right. It was necessary to have this attack on the coach take place, in order to bring the crime home to the proper persons. Now, Arizona Jake will drive you home. With him, you will be safe, for there's not a better horseman in the city."

"With him," replied Grace Amory, with a shy glance at the plainsman, "I would trust myself anywhere."

Again embarrassed, Arizona Jake resorted to his picturesque language to cover his confusion. He said:

"I lay down; ye take the pot. Get in and I'll see yer home safe or break my neck."

With a leap he landed in the box of the coach, and grasped the reins.

Chick helped Miss Amory into the coach, and Patsy assisted Mr. Amory in, closing the coach door after him.

"Here, youngster," cried Arizona Jake to Patsy, "jump up beside me and steer me right over the trail."

"Get up, Patsy," said Nick, "and hurry back."

"I'm coming back, too," cried Arizona Jake. "Ye can't drop me out of this outfit to-night."

Nick laughed and replied:

"Oh, we couldn't lose you, Jake, and I want you to come back with this carriage."

Going to the side of the coach, he said to Mr. Amory.

"In order to carry out my plans to the finish I wish to use your horses and carriage a little longer. You can safely trust your horses to the care of the man who has them in charge now. They will doubtless be returned to your stable within an hour."

Mr. Amory readily gave his consent, saying:

"After the service you have rendered us, Mr. Carter, if you never bring them back I shall be satisfied."

"Now hurry back," said Nick, "for we will await you here."

With a whoop, Arizona Jake touched up his horses, and they dashed out of the park at a speed that would have been reckless if other hands had held the reins.

CHAPTER XI.

A SECOND CORRAL.

Why the famous detective wanted the use of Mr. Amory's team was made apparent when Arizona Jake and Patsy returned to the entrance of the park, where Chick and Nick awaited them.

The policemen had gone by this time, taking the prisoners with them. All was now quiet where fifteen minutes ago there had been so much hubbub and excitement. During the absence of Patsy and Arizona Jake, Nick had, somewhere, procured a woman's garment and hat.

As the coach drew up and Patsy got down from the box, Nick, holding out the garment to him, said:

"Slip that on over your clothes, Patsy."

"What's this for?" asked Patsy.

"You've got to play the part of Grace Amory for a while," replied Nick. "And be quick about it."

While Patsy was donning the garment and hat, Nick said to Arizona Jake:

"Here, Jake, give me your hat and coat, and put this hat and coat on."

He handed to Arizona Jake the coachman's coat and hat that had been taken from Mr. Amory's coachman in Seventy-seventh street.

Arizona Jake quickly made the exchange, though it was not quite to his liking and, Nick, stowing his coat and precious broad-brimmed hat within the coach, told Patsy and Chick to get in and, giving Arizona Jake general instructions as to what direction to take, climbed in after them.

Thus it was that the coach made its way to the entrance of the park at One Hundred and Tenth street.

A thousand feet, or thereabouts, from the entrance Nick halted the coach and, telling Arizona Jake to hold it there until he returned, he got out, creeping forward toward the entrance.

Arriving at a good point of observation, he carefully looked about and saw across the circle, drawn up alongside of the curbstone, a coach with the driver on the box.

Two men lounged on the sidewalk near it, and on the opposite side of the avenue, was another man lounging under the lamp post.

As well as he could make out there was a person within the coach.

Nick then hurried back to his party and gave his instructions. To Arizona Jake he said:

"Follow this path that you are on, Jake, until you reach the entrance to the park. As soon as you drive out, incline to the left, across the circle to a coach you will see standing near the sidewalk, the only one there. Don't leave your box under any circumstances. And only use your gun if it becomes necessary to save life."

To Chick he said:

"Chick, when the coach was being driven toward the entrance to the park, down there in Eighth avenue, did not the man driving it give a whistle as a signal to the gang?"

"Yes," replied Chick. "I heard it and knew it for a signal at once."

"Do you think you could give an imitation of it?" asked Nick.

"I could come pretty close to it," replied Chick.

"Then just as we are going to leave the park give that whistle," commanded Nick.

To Patsy, Nick said:

"I take it, Patsy, that when we're stopped, the first thing they'll do will be to try take you out, supposing you to be Grace Amory. Let them do it, and make no

fight against it until they have got you out on the street. Then Chick and I will tumble out and the fun will begin. But you and Chick must take care of three men. If things get hot, use your guns, but not unless they do get too hot to stand."

Chick, who had noticed that Nick had laid out no work for himself, was curious, for he knew that in every affair of the kind his chief always took the main part and the most dangerous post. So he asked:

"What are you going to do, chief?"

"If I am not mistaken," replied Nick, "there is a man in that coach drawn up alongside the curbstone. For a thousand ducats he is the real man we want."

"What?" said Chick, with a whistle, "do you mean—"

But Nick broke in before Chick could pronounce the name, saying:

"That's the man I shall look after."

Again he turned to Arizona Jake, and said:

"Now, Jake, the success of this movement depends on you. No monkey shines, Jake, but get alongside of that coach, but not closer than fifteen or twenty feet. When they call on you to stop, pull up, and keep the driver on the box of that coach covered with your gun so that he can't interfere. Patsy and Chick must keep the three men on the ground busy, and I'll go for the head devil of this business."

He entered the coach with the command to drive on.

Arizona Jake followed directions to the letter and, as the coach reached the entrance, Chick gave his signal.

Instantly, as Arizona Jake could see from his place on the box, the three men, two on one side of the avenue, and one on the other, sprang into action, while the man on the coach gathered his reins in his hand and took up his whip.

Obeying the instructions of Nick, Jake drove to the left, across the circle, in the direction of the standing coach, noting as he did so, that the man on the other side came across at a rapid gate.

As he reached the coach, careful to keep twenty feet away from it, he saw a man peer through the window of the standing coach and immediately withdraw his head.

The two men who had been lounging on the sidewalk, running around the heads of the horses attached to the standing coach, presented themselves in front of Jake's horses, and cried out:

"Stop!"

Jake obediently pulled up, but, at the same moment, he drew his gun, concealing it under his coat.

The two men who had stopped him ran to that side of the coach nearest the standing one and, opening the door, hastily asked:

"Is it all right?"

"All right," replied Nick, in a rough voice. "Take her out quick."

One of the men, reaching in, took hold of Patsy and forcibly, by no means gently, pulled him out.

In the meantime, the man who had crossed the street had placed himself in a position near the door of the other coach.

Patsy had submitted to being drawn out of the coach,

but his feet had hardly touched the pavement before Nick and Chick were out after him.

Patsy's submissiveness ended when he was drawn out of the coach.

To the intense surprise of the man who had drawn him out and who supposed he was handling a weak female, this weak female delivered a blow straight in his eye that nearly put him out of business on the first go. Without waiting to see what the effect of his blow had been, Patsy danced up to the next one and let him have one in the stomach that nearly doubled him up with cramps.

Chick had been quite as busy at the same instant. The man he had attacked at the other coach had hardly recovered from his surprise over the viciousness of it, when Nick dashed by him, opened the coach door and sprang in, seizing the man within before he could get out on the other side.

The man, whether Macklyn, as Nick supposed, or not, made a stiff resistance, and gave Nick a stiff fight.

Nick instantly appreciated that he had no weak and dissipated club man to deal with, but a trained athlete.

The contest inside the coach was a vicious one, in which he who was fighting Nick was trying with bulldog ferocity to do Nick personal injury.

In the beginning of these contests the driver of the standing coach took in the situation.

The men attacked so vigorously by Nick, Chick and Patsy, though they realized that they had been made the victims of a surprise, were too busy in defending themselves to cry out. But the driver shouted:

"A plant! It's Nick Carter's gang!"

He raised his whip, as he shouted to his horse to go on, but Arizona Jake, leveling his gun at him, called on him to stand fast.

The man, however, did not stand fast, but letting his lash fall on the backs of his horses, they sprang forward several feet, carrying Nick and his antagonist within the coach with them.

But that was a moment for which Arizona Jake was prepared, and he sent his horses along, correspondingly, drawing his team nearer to the other.

"Pull up," he shouted, "or I'll blow the top of yer head off."

The man did not obey, and Arizona Jake astonished him with a bit of horsemanship that, as successful as it was in its purpose, necessitated the sending of his coach to the coachmaker the next day by Mr. Amory.

The driver of the other coach had succeeded by this time in getting his horses into pretty good motion, but Arizona Jake drove the front wheel of his own coach into that of the other, locking it, while he turned his own horses sharply into those of the other one, throwing them over. He then backed out in the most skillful manner without injury to his own horses and held them fast.

By the collision the driver of the other coach was nearly thrown from his box, but he recovered in time to grasp the reins firmly and assist the fallen horses to their feet.

By the time he had done this, he realized that he was covered by the gun of the desperate man, who would not fail to use it, and he said:

"I give up."

He held his horses firm.

In the meantime, the contest within the coach had been progressing with doubtful chances until Nick, perceiving that if he were to win he must put forward his best efforts, drew his revolver and grasping it by the barrel, threw himself with all his force upon the man with whom he was fighting.

Gasping him by the throat, indifferent to the blows the man was raining on his head and face, he brought down the butt of his revolver on the top of his head.

The blow rendered the man nearly, though not quite, unconscious, but it also had the effect of throwing him heavily against the door of the coach, which flew open—something both were unprepared for—and they both rolled out of the coach to the sidewalk.

Nick was the first to gain his feet, but hardly was he on them, when the man, apparently regaining full possession of himself, sprang up and faced the famous detective in an effort to continue the fight.

"He's game enough," thought Nick to himself, "to be a straight man."

Now, out upon the sidewalk, in a space not so confined as the coach had been, this man displayed unusual knowledge of the art of boxing.

Had he been facing any one but so supreme a master of that art as was the famous detective, he might have been successful, indeed, he would have been, in overcoming his contestant.

As it was, the game was kept up fully a minute before Nick found the opening he had been keenly looking for, and then came that mighty swing of his which, when started and landed, never failed to put to sleep the one who received it.

It landed in this instance, clearly on the point of the lower jaw, and the man went down like a log, wholly insensible.

Indeed, if the blow on the jaw had not put him out, as it undoubtedly did, the fall, with his head coming so severely in contact with the pavement, would have done so.

Stopping for a brief instant to look at the face of the man and see that it was indeed Macklyn, as he supposed, Nick sprang back to the assistance of his two aids who were maintaining disadvantageous odds in fighting three men.

This unequal contest had been going on from the first moment of their arrival, and had been so fast and furious that though they had the advantage, the three men could do no more than defend themselves.

Chick and Patsy had managed to keep them at bay by fighting back to back.

As Nick rushed to the assistance of his two aids, he could not but laugh at the ludicrous appearance Patsy presented.

The lad still wore the woman's dress, the skirts of which were flying in every direction, as he jumped forward and backward in delivering his blows.

A little tight about the shoulders, great gaps had been torn in it by the strength of his exertions.

His straw hat, covered with flowers and ribbons and tied under his chin, had been knocked to one side, presenting a most dissipated look, but to all of which Patsy

was indifferent, and he was delivering blows with a vigor, precision and regularity out of all keeping with the feminine dress he wore.

But as laughable as the appearance was, Nick did not wait to enjoy it.

Springing forward he hit the first man he came to under the ear, knocking him clean over, and then, leaping forward, hit the one who was engaging Chick, knocking him down.

Thus relieved Chick quickly ended the other.

The contest was over.

"Draw your guns," said Nick, drawing his own.

"Phew," exclaimed Patsy. "That was hot while it lasted. And these woman's togs didn't help a little bit."

For the first time Chick looked at Patsy and, bursting into a hearty laugh, said:

"Patsy, you've got me. You're a beaut. I'm mashed on you—dead gone."

Patsy threw himself into the arms of Chick, crying, faintly:

"Oh, George, this is so sudden. Support me. I'm faint."

Laughing as he was at the antics of his assistants, Nick commanded attention, saying:

"Don't let any of these men get away."

Fooling though they had been, neither Chick nor Patsy had lost sight of their men.

Patsy tore the clothes with which he had been disguised from him.

While he and Chick, with drawn revolvers, covered the four men lying on the ground, Nick went back to look at Macklyn, to find that he had not yet recovered consciousness.

Commanding Chick and Patsy to bind their men, he drew some restorative from his pocket, and applied himself to bringing Macklyn to consciousness.

Under his efforts, Macklyn showed signs of returning life, and when he had opened his eyes, Nick clapped on a pair of cuffs as the quickest way of keeping him quiet.

In a few moments Macklyn returned to full consciousness, and, leaping to his feet, angrily demanded the meaning of this treatment.

"The less you have to say," said Nick, "the better it will be for you, Macklyn."

"You know me, then," said Macklyn. "Who are you?"

"I am Nick Carter," replied the detective.

"Well, then, Nick Carter," said Macklyn, arrogantly, "tell me what you mean by this outrageous treatment."

"You are under arrest."

"For what?"

"For twice to-night attempting the abduction of Miss Grace Amory."

"Who makes so absurd a charge?"

"I do. Arrogance will not do here, Macklyn. I have been on your track all the evening—since the moment you tried to escape me in Eighty-first street. We've heard your talks with Coulter in that restaurant in Eighth avenue, and in your own house in Seventy-second street. We have known every step in your dastardly game, have got all your instruments under arrest, and we have got you dead. The best thing you can do is to keep quiet."

Stepping back, Nick blew a whistle, and fired his revolver twice into the air.

There was a quick response of two officers, to whom Nick said, sharply and masterfully:

"Officers, I am Nick Carter. These men are my aides," pointing to Chick, Patsy and Arizona Jake, on the box, "and these men bound and handcuffed are our prisoners, under the charge of having abducted, or attempted to abduct, a woman. Send for assistance at once, as we want to turn these prisoners over to you and go upon another part of the business."

The officers bowed and, in a short time, four other policemen made their appearance.

"Now, I want one of you to take that man on the box. He's in the game as much as the others. Another must take charge of that team and coach. There are four of you left. You ought to be able to handle the four men who are bound. But one of you must take special charge of the man in handcuffs. He is the Big Mogul of the whole push. Do not let him get away. He will try it, one way or the other, by threats or by offering money. I will never let up on the man who lets him go. Now, take off your men. I'll make the charge against them."

The prisoners were taken off by the officers, under promise of safe guarding, and were, in fact, securely landed in the One Hundred and Sixteenth Street Station.

As Nick had foreseen, Macklyn, on the way, tried to cajole the two men guarding him with stories of his importance and the outrage of the charge against him. This failing, he threatened that his influence was sufficient to break them if they did not let him go, and, this failing, he offered large sums of money to be permitted to slip away. But his efforts were unavailing.

Even when in the station-house he made the effort to obtain release, but was locked up in a common cell, the sergeant saying to him:

"You are Nick Carter's prisoner, and nobody ever interferes with his prisoners. You will have to await his action."

As the prisoners were taken away, Nick went to the coach they had come in, and, after warmly commending Arizona Jake for his part in the affair, told him that he could now drive them back to Mr. Amory's stable.

"That's all right pardner," said Arizona Jake, "but my part was a little one. You didn't let me into the fun this time."

Nick replied by saying he thought that the fun wasn't all over yet, and that Arizona Jake would have more of it before they went to bed.

The three detectives climbed into the coach, and Arizona Jake, turning his horses, set out on his return.

"It's a great night off, chief," said Chick. "Mrs. Carter must be pleased with it."

Nick merely laughed.

CHAPTER XII.

MAKING THE LAST HAUL.

Arriving at the stable of Mr. Amory, they found that gentleman awaiting their arrival, though it was now nearly midnight.

"Mr. Amory," said Nick, "we have captured the second party that waited at the upper entrance of the park to

seize Miss Amory when she was taken there. But the greatest capture of all is that of the man who was responsible for the whole attempt. And that is Charles Macklyn, the broker."

"God bless my soul," exclaimed Mr. Amory, overcome by the announcement.

After a brief pause, he said:

"There is no mistake, is there, Mr. Carter?"

"None whatever, Mr. Amory."

"I can hardly believe that Mr. Macklyn would be guilty of so base a crime," persisted Mr. Amory.

"I have not the time to tell you the whole story now," replied Nick.

He hesitated a moment, and then said:

"In all of my experience as a detective I have never had so plain a case as this. We have the proof against Mr. Macklyn to the extent of making it utterly impossible for him to escape the consequences of his act. The next few years of Macklyn's life will be spent in the State's prison."

Mr. Amory seemed to be overwhelmed by the information, but was stirred out of his amazement by a remark of Arizona Jake, who said:

"Mr. Amory, your coach ain't quite so purty as it was when I took it out. I had to lock the wheels of a galoot that attempted to run away with the boss of this yere outfit. There ain't quite so much varnish on that near front wheel. And I shouldn't wonder if some of them spokes was started, from the way they rattled comin' back."

"If you had smashed the coach so that it could not have been used again," said Mr. Amory, "I should have merely said 'Thank you all for your services of to-night.'"

Nick here put an end to these exchanges of compliments, and said:

"Now, boys, we've got to get two more men—the man who got away from us in the park, and Coulter. We will take them where we can find them. If we get them, it will be a pretty complete round-up."

"The first place to go to is to Larry's, in Tenth avenue," said Chick.

"How do you know that?" said Nick.

"Because I know that the gang employed was the 'Black Cats' of Tenth avenue, and Larry's is the hang-out of the gang."

"Do you know where Larry's is?" asked Nick.

"I don't know exactly, but we'll find it when we get over on the avenue."

"I do," said Patsy. "I was in there to-night. I haven't had a chance to tell you about it, chief, but I saw Coulter in there, too."

"Then," said Nick, "we'll go right over to the place. Where is it, Patsy?"

"Somewhere in the Forties," replied Patsy. "I don't know just where, but I can take you there straight."

"Off we go, then," said Nick. "And, Jake, I think you'll see some fun. It's as tough a place as you ever were in."

"Then it's a rough, tough place," replied Arizona Jake, "for I've been in some tough ones, where yer had to dance double-shuffle jigs to keep away from the balls that every man jack was pumping at ye."

The three detectives, with their temporary companion, now hurried across town and made their way over to Tenth avenue through Forty-second street.

Patsy had said that he thought Larry's place was several blocks above Forty-second street, but Nick had led them through that street in the belief that if news of the mishap to their companions had reached their headquarters, pickets would be out to warn the headquarters of their approach, and that those pickets would be stationed above the saloon, rather than below it, since their approach would be expected from uptown.

Stopping for a moment on the corner of Tenth avenue and Forty-second street for a brief consultation, it was finally determined that the better plan would be to go directly to the saloon.

Whereupon they boldly walked up the avenue until Patsy, halting them, pointed it out.

"Draw your guns, boys," said Nick, "and, Arizona Jake, you go in first, and we'll be right at your back."

Reaching the front of the saloon, to the astonishment, and, indeed, annoyance of Nick, Arizona Jake gave a wild whoop and dashed through the door into the saloon, yelling at the top of his voice:

"Hands up, all! I own this ranch!"

There was nothing in it but for the three detectives to follow the game Arizona Jake had made.

The saloon was in full blast, and most of those present, many of whom were women, were more or less drunk.

The answer to Arizona Jake's challenge was a shot, fired by a barkeeper from behind the bar. But, as quick as a flash, Arizona Jake returned the fire with his left hand, striking the barkeeper in the arm, and he dropped, with a shriek, behind the bar.

With a wild whoop, Jake fired again, splintering the mirror, while the other barkeeper ran from behind the bar into the rear of the saloon.

In this running man Chick immediately recognized the one who had escaped them in the park. He made a dash through the crowd, every one of which had leaped to their feet on Arizona Jake's entrance.

There was panic and confusion in the room. The women, screaming at the tops of their voices, many of them with their attendants, endeavored to escape by the various entrances.

No effort was made by the three detectives to prevent them, but a large, ruffianly-appearing man stood in the centre of the floor, yelling to them to stand fast and down Nick Carter.

Near him stood Arizona Jake, yelling and whooping and brandishing his revolver about in a most alarming manner.

Nick's quick eye had seen in the corner a man whom he had immediately taken for Coulter, and, as he saw this man edge along the rear of the wall, toward the door in the corner, he sprang across the room in an effort to prevent his escape.

Patsy, without waiting for orders or instructions, chose the big man in the centre of the room, who was, in fact, Larry, the proprietor, as his game, and, jumping at him, struck him full on the forehead with the butt end of his revolver, knocking him insensible to the floor.

In the meantime Chick was having a severe tussle and wrestling match with the man he had seized, and Nick had caught Coulter, who was just disappearing through the door, and dragged him back into the room.

As Coulter had been seized by Nick, he shouted out

some words which were unintelligible to Nick, but which, nevertheless, were understood by others in the room.

In the twinkling of an eye, a certain amount of order seemed to come out of the confusion.

The room was cleared of the women, who were on the sidewalk without, screaming and shouting, while those who were left massed themselves on one side of the room, and, drawing their guns, made an advance on the four who had come to break up their evening's entertainment.

But their advance was checked by some fast firing on the part of Patsy and Arizona Jake.

"Pump lead into 'em! Pump lead into 'em, youngster!" shouted Arizona Jake. "Oh! but ye're a daisy!"

"Back around, Jake!" shouted Patsy, in return. "Don't let them rush Chick and Nick!"

Again Coulter, making the best struggle he could against Nick Carter, shouted those unintelligible words, and the gang made a rush at Patsy and Jake.

But they were met with a perfect fusilade of shots from the two, which sent half a dozen to the floor and halted the others.

These shots had emptied the chambers of the revolvers of both Patsy and Arizona Jake, but Patsy called out:

"Come on, Jake! Give them the butts now!"

Like a whirlwind he sprang into the crowd, hitting right and left, felling some and staggering others.

With a wild whoop, Arizona Jake followed the lad's lead. In an instant he, too, was cracking the toughest skulls that Tenth avenue could present.

The gang, desperate men as they were, accustomed to rough-and-tumble fighting, could not withstand this onslaught.

After attempting to make a resistance, and firing a few vain shots, they suddenly broke and ran for the doors—that is, such of them as were able to do so.

Patsy and Jake had followed them up, striking viciously wherever they could hit and helping them out of the door.

When all had fled the room that could Jake and Patsy jumped back and secured the revolvers of those whom they had shot.

In the meantime Larry, who had regained consciousness, got up on his feet and made another desperate rush at Patsy.

Arizona Jake attempted to come to Patsy's assistance, but the lad called to him to stay back and watch, saying:

"This fellow's nothing; he's only a barrel of rum."

However willing Larry was to fight, he was no match for Patsy, who, quickly knocking him down, tied his hands.

While this was going on Nick and Chick had both overcome their men and the handcuffs had been slipped by Nick on Coulter, and by Chick on the man who had tried to disguise himself as a barkeeper.

"You've got your man all right, Chick?" asked Nick.

"All right, chief," said Chick, "and he was a tough customer."

"I suppose, Mr. Carter," said Coulter, "that you know what you're about when you undertake to arrest me this way?"

"I think I do," replied Nick, shortly.

"Well, I want to give you notice," said Coulter, "that

it will be very bad for you to make any mistakes with me."

"I'm making no mistake," said Nick.

"The fact that I defended myself against the wild lunatic of a Westerner," said Coulter, "is not sufficient reason for you to take me forcibly into arrest in this manner."

"It is you who are making mistakes now," said Nick.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Coulter.

"I'm not arresting you for anything the wild Westerner has done to you or you to him."

Coulter paled a little, and his words trembled a bit as he asked:

"If not for that, what, then, do you dare to take me under arrest for?"

"As an accomplice in the effort, twice made to-night, to abduct Miss Grace Amory."

Coulter managed to keep possession of himself, and giving a forced laugh, replied:

"You are wild, man."

"Perhaps I am," said Nick, coolly, "but as I've already had the honor to tell the man who hired you, we know every step of your game. The dead wood is on you, and your big political friend can't save you this time. It may interest you to know that when you saw Macklyn in the private room of that restaurant in Eighth avenue one of my chief aides overheard your conversation."

Coulter started visibly.

"And it may further interest you to know," Nick went on, "that when you called on Macklyn at his house in Seventy-second street I was the man who received you at the door, and that I was in the room while you laid the plot to capture Miss Amory a second time."

"Hell!" exclaimed Coulter, now white as a sheet.

"And," continued Nick, "it may interest you also to know that one of my chief aides saw you organize the second gang here in this place, and that another saw you drug Mr. Amory's coachman through your instrument, while you waited up the street to see that it was done."

On this direct connection of himself with the affair, Coulter staggered back and was compelled to support himself against a table near by.

Nick went on, remorselessly:

"It may please you to know that when your heeler, acting as a coachman, drove Mr. and Miss Amory to the Eighth avenue entrance of the park, he also drove my chief aide, who was there to ride with Miss Amory when Macklyn had enticed her out of the house."

Coulter made a gesture as if everything was hopeless, and Nick went on, triumphantly:

"We got your men at that entrance, and we went up to One Hundred and Tenth street, where we got four more men and Macklyn."

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Coulter, "did you get him, too?"

"He is under lock and key, where you will be shortly."

Addressing his assistants, Nick said:

"Now take our prisoners out. Patsy, you and Arizona Jake go out first, and shoot to kill any man that interferes."

Nick had raised his voice as he gave this order, so that anybody on the sidewalk who might be listening could hear it. To Coulter he said:

"You want to make it your business, Coulter, to see that nobody interferes with us, for the first step will result in a ball in your head."

Patsy threw open the door, and, with a revolver in each hand, sprang out to the sidewalk, with Arizona Jake a close second.

On the corner was gathered a dozen toughs, evidently bent upon a rescue.

"At them, Jake," cried Patsy, jumping forward and firing as he did.

Arizona Jake was not slow in following, and the group broke and ran to the other side of the street.

Nick and Chick brought their prisoners out.

They had hardly reached the pavement when a file of policemen, in charge of a sergeant, came down the avenue on a run.

The shooting within Larry's saloon had been reported at the station house, and a guard had been turned out as a consequence.

Approaching Nick, the sergeant exclaimed:

"What is this?"

"Oh, we've only been taking a couple of prisoners," replied Nick. "I am Nick Carter."

"Oh!" exclaimed the sergeant, "and you've got them? Well, Mr. Carter, you've taken them out of a tough place. How many were there of you altogether?"

"Four of us."

"Only four?" asked the sergeant. "It's a wonder you were not all murdered. What can I do for you now?"

"Clear that corner," replied Nick, "and protect us from rescue."

The sergeant now turned to look at Nick's prisoner, and started back in astonishment, crying:

"Heavens, it's Coulter!"

Turning short, he addressed his men and told them to clear the corners of every one there.

As the platoon of policemen advanced with drawn clubs, all of those who had gathered on the corner and in the cross street broke and ran in the direction of Eleventh avenue.

Recalling his men, the sergeant formed them behind Nick and Chick, with their prisoners, and, with Patsy and Arizona Jake in advance, the procession moved to the station house, where Coulter and his heeler were safely locked up.

Nick, calling to Chick, Patsy and Arizona Jake, went out into the street.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF NICK'S NIGHT OFF.

When they were together outside of the station house Nick said:

"Pretty good night's work, boys. As good a night as ever I put in. We have found the crime, run down the men, caught them in the act, and arrested fourteen prisoners, every single man that was concerned in it. A complete round-up."

Chick burst into hearty laughter, in which he was joined by Patsy.

"Well," said Nick, good-naturedly, "what's so funny to the boys?"

"I'm thinking, chief," replied Chick, "that you've got

something more to do to-night before you can call this work done."

"And what is that, my bold aide?" asked Nick.

"You've got to square yourself with Mrs. Carter for that night off that you have given her."

"I say, chief," said Patsy, "Chick and I will go with you to the door, but I guess this will be one time when we leave you to fight your own battle."

Nick laughed with his assistants, but made no answer.

"Chick doesn't dare see Mrs. Carter to-night," laughed Patsy.

"Why not, young 'un?" asked Chick.

"Didn't you promise Mrs. Carter that you'd bring the chief back in half an hour?" asked Patsy.

"That's what he did, Patsy," replied Nick, with a laugh. "I'll send Chick in first to explain how it was he didn't keep his word."

"Oh, no, you don't," replied Chick. "Patsy's the only one who told Mrs. Carter that he was taking orders from her. Let him square it."

"Who is this you're all afraid of?" said Arizona Jake.

The three detectives burst into hearty laughter, to the Westerner's puzzlement, for the laugh showed that it was a joke between the three.

Finally Patsy said:

"The chief's boss."

"The one whom all of 'Nick Carter's outfit,' as you call it, are sworn to obey," laughed Chick.

"And the sweetest woman in the world," added Nick. "My wife."

"And I take off my hat to her," said Arizona Jake, sweeping his broad-brimmed hat from his head.

Then Chick told Arizona Jake how his chief had taken a night off, and was to attend a small party with his wife, and what the result of his endeavor to get shaved for the purpose had resulted in.

"Well," said Arizona Jake, "it was a lively night off. If these are the kind of nights off you take, the rest of them must be howlers. I'm going to stay around this settlement for another month, or, as long as my boodle holds out, and if you have got any other night off, why just count me in. Life ain't worth livin' out in Red Gulch alongside o' this hyer."

The three men laughed heartily at Arizona Jake's idea of fun, and the Westerner continued:

"I didn't think you could put up such a game here in the East as you did to-night. I've got something to tell the boys when I go back that'll make 'em stretch their eyes."

It was now after one o'clock. Nick asked Arizona Jake where he was stopping, and, finding that it was at a hotel on Sixth avenue, not far from Fifty-ninth street, said they would see him safely to his room and bid him good-night there.

Reaching the hotel, they had some difficulty in getting away from their volunteer aide, since he wanted to celebrate his membership of "Nick Carter's outfit" by producing a basket of wine.

But, by promising him to let him join them in any similar case that might come to them, they made their escape from his hospitality.

Chick and Patsy escorted their chief to his own apartments, where they found Edith, but shortly returned from her party.

"You have taken a night off, indeed, Nick," she said. "But I forgive you, for I have heard a portion of the story, and know that an attempt was made which you interfered with, and prevented, to abduct Miss Amory."

"And how did you learn that?" replied Nick.

"A cousin of Miss Amory's was of our party, and heard it before coming to us. When I heard that you had rescued her, I gave up all hope of seeing you this night."

Nick told the experiences of the night with its complete success, to Edith's great interest, and Chick and Patsy went their way with instructions to meet their chief early in the morning, so as to take the next steps in the punishment of their prisoners.

"Our prisoners," said Nick, as he dismissed them, "are pretty well scattered over town, and we'll have some difficulty in getting them together."

Since that memorable night all of the prisoners have been put on trial and convicted.

The proof which the detectives had gathered, step by step, as they went through the stirring events of that night, was so conclusive that hardly a defense was presented.

Bulldog and fighter as he was, Macklyn, as the proof was piled upon him, broke down finally and confessed that his purpose had been to seize Miss Amory, and, taking her to a house he had prepared for the purpose in a remote part of Fordham Heights, force Miss Amory into a marriage with him.

He most emphatically declared that he had no other purpose in view and meant no other harm to Miss Amory.

The court, however, while accepting his confession, did not take that view of it, but apparently assumed that his intention was quite as bad as the circumstances seemed to suggest.

In his confession he made an effort to clear the skirts of Coulter, who, he declared, was not acquainted with his purpose, but had done no more than to place at his disposal the men who would carry out the plans which he alone had made.

But though he did this, and the big politician, who was the friend of Coulter, used all the influence he could exert, Coulter could not be saved.

The boss of the "Black Cats" was sentenced to State's prison for a term of five years.

Macklyn was sentenced to a term of double that number of years, and is now making shirts in Sing Sing prison.

One of the curious results of the trial and exposure was the absolute breaking up of the gang of the "Black Cats."

The notoriety which the saloon that Larry presided over obtained through it operated in an adverse way, and it was not long thereafter when Larry was compelled to give it up.

Arizona Jake remained in town the full period of his month, and, though he frequently met Nick Carter and his assistants, he did not participate again in one of Nick Carter's cases or again become a member of "Nick Carter's outfit."

He had taken a violent fancy to Patsy, and tried hard to persuade the lad to return to the West with him.

"You're the gamest youngster I ever hit," he said, "the quickest at the trigger, and the surest with your fists. If you'll come with me, we'll clean out every ranch there is in Arizona."

But Patsy was not to be persuaded, for he told Arizona Jake that he would not leave Nick Carter as long as there was a square inch of his chief to be seen.

"Well," said Arizona Jake, swallowing his disappointment, "I reckon you're about right. There ain't many like Carter, and when ye do find such a man, an' he does cotton to ye, ye want to cotton back with all your hooks. I guess you're about right."

When, finally, he did leave New York on his return to the West, Nick, Chick and Patsy saw him off, and he proudly carried under his arm a case of the handsomest brace of revolvers that Nick Carter could buy in recognition of his services on Nick's one great "night off."

He also carried a handsome hunting outfit, the gift of Mr. Amory, and a gold watch, that bore this inscription on the inside case: "From Grace Amory to her brave preserver, Arizona Jake."

But what he was prouder of than all, was her photograph, on which was written, "Your friend, Grace Amory."

THE END.

Next week's NICK CARTER WEEKLY (No. 235) will contain "Nick Carter Against a Rival; or, A Chase After Documents."

LATEST ISSUES:

- 233—Nick Carter in the Witness Chair; or, A Surprise for a Shyster Lawyer.
- 232—Nick Carter in the Air; or, The Perils of a Female Gymnast.
- 231—Trapped by a Hypnotist; or, Nick Carter on the Track of a Swell Abductor.
- 230—Nick Carter's Unknown Foe; or, A Bold Game of Blackmail.
- 229—Nick Carter's Time Lock Puzzle; or, The Mystery Five's Big Haul.
- 228—Nick Carter in Harness Again; or, At Odds of Five to Two.
- 227—Caught By the Lightning Mail; or, Bob Ferret's Alliance with a Peruvian Mesmerist.
- 226—Nick Carter's Junior Force; or, The Man with Four Arms.
- 225—Done with a Click; or, The Mystery of the Painted Arm.
- 224—A Young Detective's Air Route; or, The Great Hindoo Mystery.
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- 222—Nick Carter's Newsboy Friend; or, The Great Sandoval Mystery.
- 221—Worse Than Murder; or, Nick Carter's Second Assistant on the Suburban Robberies.
- 220—Mid Flying Bullets; or, Lively Times on the Chesapeake.
- 219—From Hotel to Prison Cell; or, A Criminal Globe Trotter's Useless Bribe.
- 218—The "Tyburn T"; or, Nick Carter and the Body-Snatchers.
- 217—Nick Carter's Double Header; or, The Ins and Outs of a Boston Sensation.
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- 215—Nick Carter's Name at Stake; or, After the Sunset City Sharpers.
- 214—Blackmailed for Thousands; or, The Facts in the Famous Ford Poisoning Case.
- 213—A Swindler in Petticoats; or, Nick Carter's Pretty Prisoner.
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